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THE SISTERS:

A NOVEL,

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

LONDON:

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THE SISTERS.

CHAPTER I.

But is it she? Oh! yes; the rose is dead,
Its beauty, fragrance, freshness, glory fled :
But yet 'tis she—the same, and not the same
Who to my bower an heavenly being came.

Crabbe.

THAT which will ever influence a woman devotedly attached to her husband, the desire of being more pleasing in his eyes than those of any other;—that regard for his person, esteem for his understanding, which will sometimes supply the place of better motives, and produce that behaviour in a wife which ought to spring from principle, Rosalind had never

felt for Evanmore. Coquetry, the love of power, commingled with various other reasons and feelings, had made her esteem him a conquest of some value, but he was not the man to excite her real love, or retain her respect.

Unhappily, Rosalind's mind was calculated neither for the moderate enjoyments of domestic life, nor the tranquil happiness of married love. Gifted with strong passions herself, she saw no shade between the transports of romantic attachment and the callous induration of morbid indifference. She had been accustomed to hear herself called an angel, to perceive herself the object of adoration, till it became treason to hint that she was mortal, to see her without rapture; and the unimpassioned tenderness, the gentleness of Evanmore's attentions, seemed, to her vitiated imagination, rather insults to the omnipotence of her charms, than incense offered to their shrine. Still the first two years of their marriage passed tolerably happily. Evanmore, indeed, sometimes complained of her expenses, and remonstrated against her gaiety, but his complaints were always couched in the language of affection, or clothed in gentle flattery, and she

heard them without any sensation but that of weariness. Since, however, their fatal excursion to Brighton, the mind of each had undergone a change which gave a different colour to their mutual feelings. Of Lord Edgermond she had, from the instant he disappointed and deceived her while there with Lady Wyedale two Summers before, determined to think no more, and even after they again met, she persisted in her resolution.

But it is more difficult for a coquet to abstain from the indulgence of her favourite passion, than to conquer that attachment which gave it birth. She was then, for the first time, exposed to temptation ; and as it is seldom that great virtues are very conspicuous in those who neglect the lesser ones, or the road to self-government is made at one bound from that of self-indulgence, the same lures once more overpowered the feeble bulwark which pride, not virtue, had raised against their intimacy. She returned to town still pure in mind, but her regard for Evanmore had visibly declined. At this dangerous period his remonstrances became daily more serious. Alverston-house, after expending considerable sums in adver-

THE SISTERS.

tisements, remained unlet. It was a large, old-fashioned, ill-contrived building, too spacious for the estate, and little likely to be interesting to persons uninfluenced by family feelings, or local prejudices. The estate was entailed on a male heir, and, as such, incapable of being either sold, dismembered, or heavily mortgaged. He had always lived up to his income; and though the death of his mother, he had hoped, would a little relieve his embarrassments, he found it weighed only as a feather against the extravagance of his wife. Her own fortune was dissipated in the various losses he sustained by changing and furnishing the houses in which he had so imprudently speculated; and terrified at his situation, regretting his former supineness, and his unwillingness to oppose her wishes, he insisted upon such a reduction in their establishment and expenditure, as would once more make him independent. Rosalind heard him with astonishment and indignation.

Her wants had hitherto been so regularly and profusely supplied, that though she had occasionally experienced a few days inconvenience, after some act of unbounded extra-

gance, she had never known what it was to feel any real deprivation, make any real sacrifice, or encounter any real difficulty; and she received his assurance, that she must now learn to live within a narrow income, with as much resentment and impatient surprise, as though he had possessed the mines of Peru; and, from a cruel desire to insult and ill-treat her, was determined to shut them from her use.

Educated in habits of show and expense, and wholly unacquainted with economical calculation, she would neither endure the idea of submitting to the smallest privation, nor could be made to understand the absolute necessity which required it. She protested that she would not be debarred from every common enjoyment of life, would not consent to forfeit her station in society, by sacrificing her house in town, her carriage, and all those comforts she had possessed from her birth. Alike provoked at her folly, and exasperated at her impertinence, Evanmore met these puerile complainings, and perverse opposition to that which was the effect of necessity, not avarice, with open violence, or sullen displeasure. His was not that vehemence, that effervescence of

temper, which is easily roused into passion; but when a long series of injuries or mortifications had, at length, excited his indignation, the bitterness of his resentments, and the strength of his feelings, were scarcely less remarkable than his usual placidity. But though he could sometimes, when driven to desperation, threaten, rave, and recriminate, he did not possess energy of character sufficient to *persevere* in a course of firm opposition; and while the suspicious implication, the angry glance, the scornful reply, the biting personality, hourly undermined the slender fabric of their love, he had not fortitude to assert the privileges of a husband, could not prevail upon himself to tear his imprudent wife from those luxuries, that society, to which she attached so high a value. With one part of her misconduct he was, indeed, in great measure unacquainted. He abhorred her intimacy with Lord Edgermond, but he had no idea, that it was lowering her in the opinion of the world. His situation as a husband precluded the probability of his hearing the rumours that were circulated at her expense; and in this fatal, but blissful, state of unconsciousness he remained till a few days prior to

her elopement, when the blow fell upon him with a degree of suddenness and violence, proportionable to his former security.

When Felicia presented to Rosalind the confession of Miss Beaumont, she happened to be sitting near a beautiful inlaid cabinet, which formed one of the principal ornaments of her drawing-room. Willing to change the conversation as quickly as possible, she immediately put it along with the newspaper which produced it, into one of the private drawers, intending to remove it the instant Felicia left her. This intention was frustrated by the presence of Evanmore, who spent the evening at home ; and, her mind relieved from all its previous anxiety, she never afterwards remembered to change its exposed situation for one more secure. Once or twice, indeed, she thought of it; but she was either in company, or preparing for company, or Evanmore was in the way, and, heedless as she was imprudent, both were suffered to remain where she had carelessly thrown them. She was dressing for the Opera when Evanmore sent to request a few sheets of writing-paper. Too much engrossed by this important avocation to open her port-folio, she

informed him, in a hasty message, that she believed he would find some in the Indian cabinet. Impatient of interruption, she then resumed her employment, and unconscious of her folly, was proudly surveying herself in a lofty mirror, when Evanmore, his face livid with horror, his voice mute with indignation, burst upon her sight. He had sought, as she directed him, in the cabinet for the paper he wanted, and not finding it in any of the open drawers, continued his search till he came to the private one containing those papers, which had hitherto been preserved from his knowledge. They would have escaped his inspection, had he not seen, as he carelessly eyed them, "Last dying Speech and Confession of a detected Foolosopher," in Rosalind's hand, written on the back of Miss Beaumont's declaration, with a lead pencil. He smiled, supposing it some little pedantic effusion of Miss Beaumont's, opened it to gratify his curiosity, and the following lines instantly met his blasted view :

"I, Lucretia Beaumont, do here solemnly declare, that I was impelled to insert the paragraph which appeared in yesterday's paper re-

“ reflecting on the honour of Mrs. Evanmore,
“ solely from private feelings of resentment
“ against her, for having been the author of a
“ copy of verses, calculated to render Mr.
“ Flickerton and myself ridiculous. I am ex-
“ tremely sorry, that I should have taken so cruel
“ a revenge, and earnestly entreat she will for-
“ give this unassisted, unjust libel on her fame.

“ LUCRETIA BEAUMONT.”

“ *Signed in the presence of*
FELICIA LEYCESTER.”

Evanmore did not breathe, but with frantic eagerness seized on the accompanying newspaper. The fatal paragraph soon presented itself; and, in a moment, the flagrant impropriety of Rosalind's conduct in thus continuing to admit Lord Edgermond's attentions, the obloquy under which she laboured, were apparent to his tortured senses. With these agonizing reflections arose the recollection of the part Felicia had borne in this disgraceful transaction. She had evidently been the person who had traced and wrung this confession from Miss Beaumont. He took a hasty survey of the past, and discovered that Felicia's first

visit to his house, her first appearance with them in public, had been the day following this open attack on the reputation of her sister. Again he perused this everlasting stigma on the character of his wife. Its allusion to the situation in which he had once stood to Felicia —to her anguish at his desertion, stung him to almost madness; and as he rapidly contrasted them together, he twisted the paper with frantic violence between his trembling hands, and cursed the hour that had made him a husband.

Long, bitter, and terrible, was the scene that followed. Rosalind met his almost inarticulate reproaches and frantic threats, with a proportionable degree of violence, or the deathly laugh of scorn; and goaded to fury, Evanmore's rage over-leaped all the bounds of reason and decorum. Though she openly defied his power, Rosalind was secretly terrified at his transports, and she fled to the Opera, not more to assert her will, than escape his ungoverned ebullitions of passion. There she was met by Lord Edgermond. The remembrance of the scene from which she had just torn herself, threw a damp over her fea-

tures and spirits, which she fruitlessly tried to shake off or conceal. His Lordship rallied her on her depression, and exerted himself so successfully to remove it, that she returned to her wretched home yet more incensed against her exasperated husband.

The succeeding night and day were passed in profound and gloomy silence. Evanmore was too deeply wounded to make the most distant overtures towards a reconciliation, and Rosalind would have disdained to accept them had they been tendered. The evening was devoted to a private ball, given by Lady Clarinda Lovelace ; but Evanmore, in the tumult of his feelings, had forgotten its destination ; and not till he saw Rosalind step full-dressed into her carriage, did he know she meant to go from home. As he beheld her seemingly unruffled brow, and the graceful care which marked the decorations of her lovely form, he execrated the cold callousness of a heart which could find pleasure in such sources at such a period ; and when he returned from the window to his solitary fire, the image of Felicia Leycester, sitting near its glowing flame, her work-table before her, employed in manufacturing some of those

ingenious trifles which she appropriated to charitable purposes, or reading some work calculated to amend her heart and improve her taste, was his companion. He sighed as he dismissed this forbidden vision from his fancy. He was married to her sister, and though the down had been rudely brushed from the pinions of love, she was still dear to him. She had received his vows, had sacrificed to him the matchless beauties of her person, was the mother of his child ; and as his heart softened by these remembrances, he determined to bury the past in oblivion, remove her from the scene of temptation, and by increased tenderness endeavour to atone for this opposition to her wishes. He would solicit a renewal of their affection, would ascribe his late unkindness to its just cause,—disappointed attachment ; calmly go into his accounts, and after dispassionately stating that he could not remain in London without ruin to both, propose their retiring for a few years to the Continent.

There are few emotions more productive of happiness to the heart, than those which arise from a wish and determination to return to a state of love and friendliness with those who

possess our best affections, who are united to us by the nearest and dearest ties of social life ; and pleased by these resolutions, gratified by the dawning tranquillity of his spirits, Evanmore determined to sit up for his absent wife. Immersed in thought, he was insensible to the flight of time, till a chilly sensation pervading his frame, he looked at his decaying fire, and saw its last embers were fast expiring. "Rosalind is long," thought he, trying to re-animate the expiring flame. But hour after hour elapsed, still Rosalind came not. Evanmore began to feel uneasy, and awaited in breathless expectation her arrival. But no sounds broke upon his listening ear, excepting those which now and then proceeded from a straggling coach as it rumbled over the deserted streets, or at stated intervals the hoarse cry of the watch.

The bustle of business, the sounds of revelry, the clamour of life, the noise of the distant multitude gradually died away, and morning gleamed into the apartment where sat the weary Evanmore, in solitary comfortless grandeur. "Where can she be gone?" was the question he often murmured ; but no one was

near to answer it. With that attention to the happiness of all within his limited sphere which ever distinguished him, he had long since dismissed his domestics to repose; and restless, impatient, and half alarmed, he sought among her cards to learn where she was spending the night. They were thrown indiscriminately into a superb rose-wood basket, and nearly an hour was spent ere Evanmore drew from amid the countless multitude, an invitation for that evening, to a private ball from Lady Clarinda Lovelace. He tossed it into the basket, and the ardour of his reviving attachment insensibly cooled by the information, that it was at the house of Lord Edgermond's cousin she was spending those hours he had passed in silent gloom, or fond anticipation of happier days; relinquished his intention of waiting for her, and throwing himself on his bed, soon fell into a sleep, rendered long and profound by previous exhaustion. When he unclosed his eyes, he found he was alone; but Rosalind had lately, when she came from any party, of which he had not been her companion, occupied a room adjoining, and he felt no uneasiness. It was noon, and hastily dressing himself, he

sought, as usual, the apartment of his child, ere he descended into the breakfast-parlour. She was playing on the floor, but hearing his well-known step, ran to meet him.

"My darling!" he cried, fondly catching her in his arms. And as he glanced, with a father's pride, over her Hebe countenance, he thought of the mother with renovated tenderness.

"When did Mrs. Evanmore come home?" said he to the nurse, who stood with her back turned towards him. The woman did not speak. He repeated the question, and in a voice choaked by agitation, she murmured something, signifying that she was not yet returned. Evanmore felt a cold rush at his heart, he pressed his child tighter to it; then ashamed of the dark suspicion that floated over his mind, tried to recall the receding blood by supposing she had remained to breakfast. Fearful of exposing his anxiety, he left the room, and rang for the urn. It was brought in by the servant who usually waited for his mistress, and had accompanied her to Lady Clarinda's the preceding evening.

"When are you to fetch your mistress?"

said he, with seeming carelessness. The man looked confused, and hesitated as he said, "he had received no orders." "When did you return?" asked Evanmore, with a growing alarm he vainly tried to repress or conceal.

"About four o'clock, Sir. Lord Edgermond told me, as my Lady would sleep at Lady Clarinda Lovelace's, she did not require the carriage to wait any longer."

"Lord Edgermond!" muttered Evanmore, in a suffocated voice, and turning to the table he strove to master the strong overwhelming feelings of doubt and dread that oppressed his recoiling senses. Rosalind had never slept at Lady Clarinda's before. Springing from the table, he resolved to seek her. His heart palpitating violently, he reached Lady Clarinda's, and rapped loudly at the door: it was long ere the summons was answered. There was a something in the man's manner as he saw him, that planted a dagger in his bosom; and scarcely knowing what he said, he inquired if Mrs. Evanmore were up.

"She is—I believe, Sir—not—"

"Not what!" said Evanmore, with convulsive energy.

" Not here, Sir."

" Where? Where?" he instantly past the man, flew up the stairs, and burst into the first room that met his phrenzied sight.

It was the ball-room—the drapery before the windows was only half drawn up, and the dull light of a Winter's morning, thus partially admitted, rendered more dreary and desolate every surrounding object. The festoons of flowers with which the walls had been decorated, half torn from their stations, hung drooping and withered. The floor presented nothing but a dingy mixture of dirty colours, and imperfect forms. The fires at either end were burnt out, and a high wind roared down the naked chimnies. A few tapers still dimly glaring in their sockets, threw a funereal light on these monuments of faded pleasure; and as he took a rapid and involuntary survey of the dreary scene, while a servant went to inform Lady Clarinda that he must speak with her instantly, Evanmore felt his heart die within him. The man soon returned, to say Lady Clarinda was not up; but that as she understood he had inquired for Mrs. Evanmore, she begged to say, she altered her original in

tention after his servants returned home ; and had left her house in Lord Edgermond's carriage, to sleep with her sister at Lady Wyedale's.

The improbability of this tale flashed on Evanmore's sickening soul ; but still it was not impossible, and he flew to Lady Wyedale's to ascertain its veracity. The rest has been told ; but the feelings of a husband on sustaining such a blow, no pen can portray, no heart conceive, but that which has thus drank the bitterest cup of affliction to its very dregs.

CHAPTER II.

Elate with hope, the young enthusiast came,
Her bosom fluttering at a sister's name.
Years had elapsed since last she saw that face
By beauty gifted with each dazzling grace ;
But fond affection fanned the sacred flame,
And bid her glory in her Rosa's fame.
The varied charms that gild that blissful hour
When the gay spirit owns no adverse power—
The hopes that dawn upon the youthful breast—
The confidence that lulls each little fear to rest—
The heart that pictures all things fair and bright,
And bids it heave with insecure delight,
Were shared by her—and in her arms she caught
The lovely being who filled each tender thought.
To every scene of worldly falsehood new,
Her artless views of life from self she drew ;
And idly thought in Rosa's breast to find
The person equall'd by the virtuous mind.
Too soon, alas ! the dear delusion fled,
And Rosa wrung the bitter tears she shed.
The angel sister, lov'd so long—so true—
Faded in sickening colours from her view.
The beauteous form remain'd—the only trace
Of all that once was innocence and grace !

IT was long before Felicia could believe the reality of what had passed. It appeared to

her as a frightful, awful illusion of her fancy—a dream of shapeless images of misery. Could it be, that Rosalind, after having sacrificed so much to obtain the hand of her husband, had fled from him to the arms of a profligate seducer! Oh, could it be, that the sister of her affections,—she in whom all the romantic associations of her youth had centred,—she whose image no unkindness, no imprudence, no absence, could obliterate, was indeed become that guilty abject thing, from whom even the dearest and nearest relative must shrink with horror—must consign to oblivion!

Lady Wyedale's grief was the ravings of rage and despair. This termination of Rosalind's unguarded career she had never anticipated, and she felt, as her aunt, and the guardian and guide of her youth, some portion of its disgrace rested on her. But a proud, callous heart is seldom made humble by adversity; and while she felt that Rosalind's deviation from honour reflected shame on her, she would not trace the reason of what she admitted—would not see that her ill-fated niece was the victim of a wretched education, rather than of her own evil propensities. No compassion for the

misguided creature, who had thus idly fancied she should find happiness in guilt and disgrace, mingled with her reflections ; and the only satisfaction she seemed to feel, was found in loading her with execrations.

Felicia's emotions were of a very different complexion. She felt her sister's dereliction from virtue with the acutest sensations of shame and regret. She considered it not merely as one that must affect her own fair unblemished name with the stain of dishonour ; but as a crime involving in its magnitude the most direful and extensive misery. Yet pity was the prominent feeling. Her affection for Rosalind had begun with her being, had flourished in defiance of those storms with which it had been so frequently assailed : she could not tear her from her heart ; and even now, memory lingered over the loved remembrance of their childhood. She recalled the sunny hours of their youth, the brilliant promise of her opening day ; wept to think so fair a flower had not been nursed to maturity by the hand of a judicious guide, and writhed in silent anguish under this last fatal stroke. Still she felt it was rather afflictive than surprising.

She had not, indeed, contemplated this dark close of Rosalind's want of principle; but she had seen, that the heavy clouds which had been so long congregating, could be dispersed only by a storm, and her reason acknowledged, that it was not so extraordinary as terrible.

"Alas!" she thought, "when the heart once leaves its proper residence, when it flies from its home to the society of the world, how frequently does ruin as well as misery pursue the thoughtless fugitive!"

The paroxysms of Lady Wyedale's rage, and Felicia's horror, were slowly beginning to subside into grief, deep and heartfelt, when a servant announced Mrs. Hustleton. As yet they had received no visitors; for though Rosalind's flippant wit had made her many enemies who rejoiced in her fate, the feelings of her sister and aunt were, to a certain degree, regarded with compassion; and calls of kind inquiry, or notes of apparent sympathy, had hitherto only met their eyes.

As she advanced into the room, Felicia, rendered suspicious by former acts of insolent impertinence, and a thorough knowledge of her

character, eyed her with a look of keen investigation, and felt her colour rise, and her heart throb, as she marked the suppressed curiosity, and blended emotions of malice and exultation that strove for mastery in her countenance.

“ Dear Lady Wyedale,” said she, taking her Ladyship’s hand, “ this is so kind, so friendly, I almost feared I should not have been admitted, and you know not how I have thought of you and your sweet niece, dear Miss Leycester.”

Now, Lady Wyedale’s “ sweet niece, dear Miss Leycester,” was of all others the object of her unqualified aversion. To the airy impertinence of Rosalind she could sometimes offer a decent retort ; and though it chafed her irascible temper, it did nothing more. But there was in Felicia, a something that inspired her with alarm. In her cool, penetrating glance, and civil yet pointed distance, a something that seemed to say she was *known*—that the little crooked policy of her heart lay exposed to her contempt ; and while her proud haughty spirit was exasperated to almost madness by this idea, she dared not give utterance to the malice that rankled at her heart, or

would admit, even to herself, that terror prompted those obsequious attentions — that servile adulation with which she sought to avert her dislike.

"Dear Miss Leycester," she continued turning to Felicia, "always employed! Oh, what a treasure you must be to your good aunt!"

The emphasis on *you*, and the sidling, cringing, fawning manner, as with an air of extreme interest, she looked first at her, and then at Lady Wyedale, prepared Felicia for the attack meditated; and scarcely breathing, she listened to her inquiries after Lady Wyedale's health, in tones that announced she expected to hear she was extremely indisposed. "I am so glad to hear you are pretty well; for, indeed, I was afraid, my dear, dear Lady Wyedale this terrible blow would have been too much for you and your amiable niece."

A cloud overspread her Ladyship's brow; but it was instantly dispelled by the well-timed flattery of her insidious visitor.

"I am sure," she pursued in a whining voice, "your Ladyship knows me too well to suppose for a moment I would have alluded to

the late unhappy event in your family, but from a desire to offer you and dear Miss Leycester every consolation in my power—your Ladyship in particular—whose attachment and maternal kindness to poor misguided Mrs. Evanmore, must render such a circumstance particularly afflictive. Indeed, your Ladyship does not imagine how all your friends sympathise with you. I assure you I have felt more for you than I can describe; for certainly your Ladyship has not experienced the return you ought for such unparalleled goodness; but do not, I entreat you, permit this dreadful calamity to weigh on your spirits. Hope, my dear Madam, for the best; and though it must be additionally painful to you, that what has occurred should become the subject of that legal investigation, which I presume will—”

“ I know not,” interrupted Lady Wyedale, in a phrenzy of passion. “ I have never descended to hold any intercourse with him, since his stolen marriage with a wretch I have disclaimed for ever.”

“ But no doubt such will be the result of what has passed,” said she, with a look of anxious solicitude at Felicia.

Indignant at this mean and unfeeling attempt to satisfy her curiosity, Felicia kept her eyes firmly fixed on her work, and appeared unconscious the question was addressed to her.

"And poor Mr. Evanmore! you know, at such a time one can't help feeling for him, however blameable his conduct. I hear he supports himself with as much fortitude as can be expected, and that the parties are gone to the Continent; but you are of course better acquainted with these points than the world, because the poor misguided fugitive, no doubt, left a letter or something to extenuate this imprudent, unfortunate step."

"No, indeed," replied Lady Wyedale, "she is too abandoned to deem extenuation necessary."

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" said Mrs. Hustleton, shaking her head. "Then your Ladyship does not know where they are gone to. She has never written to you?"

"These are questions, Madam," said Felicia, "which I had hoped we should have been spared. It can be of no importance to the world to know the particulars of —"

"Oh no, my dear Miss Leycester, certainly

not to the *world*, but your *friends*, the *old* friends of poor dear Lady Wyedale, must always take an interest in what so nearly concerns her. Feeling for her as I do, and knowing as I do, how much the thing is talked of, and how much Mrs. Evanmore is reflected upon, I own, out of my regard for my dear friend Lady Wyedale, I should have been glad to have had it in my power to say she had something to allege in excuse for her flight, and that she had so far considered the feelings of her family as to inform them where she was, and confirm their hopes that Lord Edgermond would act honourably towards her when Mr. Evanmore had obtained——”

“Oh, Ma’am,” said Felicia, somewhat bitterly, “a married woman can never have any thing to plead in extenuation of breaking every law, human and divine; nor we any thing to hope from the honour of a man who has trampled on the rights of hospitality, violated the most sacred bonds of society, and evinced himself utterly destitute of every virtuous principle. Under these calamitous circumstances, I think it some atonement of her crime, that she has not attempted to shift the burthen of her

iniquity on her injured husband—some proof of her self-abasement, that she seeks to hide her disgrace from every former friend and acquaintance.”

“Well, dear Miss Leycester, I am glad you see Mrs. Evanmore’s conduct in so favourable a point of view. I assure you, it was a desire to throw a more agreeable colouring over her elopement, that induced me to make these inquiries. I should have been happy to say to all my friends that—”

“Madam,” interrupted Felicia, calmly, but pointedly, “those who feel for our grief, and lament my sister’s errors, will best evince their sincerity by forbearing to touch on such a topic, by consigning her faults and her remembrance alike to oblivion.”

Nothing is more exasperating to an artful mind than its perceiving not only that its motives have been exposed, but its designs defeated by the superior address of another. Mrs. Hustleton saw her meanness and hypocrisy were alike visible to Felicia’s penetration, and her own secret cunning overmatched by her open candour.

Baffled and incensed by this indirect, yet

cutting reproof, she gave her a look of suppressed rage and malevolence, and then turning to Lady Wyedale with a smiling face, as she bowed in assent, said, "At Miss Leycester's request, I will change this unfortunate subject to one more agreeable. I am sure you will rejoice to hear Mr. Osborne is the accepted lover of Miss Louisa Dursley."

No gratulations met her ear, for Lady Wyedale was not quite sure whether she had not taken a liberty with her, and Felicia did not wish to appear otherwise than as she felt, deeply wounded by her indelicate allusion to Rosalind's disgrace, and the half-suppressed malice that she could not help thinking, lurked under her misplaced sympathy.

But no way dismayed, she pursued : "The Dursleys are such a charming family, 'tis impossible not to be delighted with such a connexion. Frank might have aspired to more fortune, for she will only have five thousand pounds, but fortune was *never* any object with him. Indeed, I think it's never of the least importance, when put in competition with the more solid and durable charms of the mind and goodness, all of which the bride elect

possesses in a high degree. Indeed, the whole family are, without exception, the most superior persons I ever met with; so clever, so charitable, so properly pious; for after all that has been said of their bigotry, I assure you, no people can enjoy life more. Every thing about them in the most complete style of elegance—their house, furniture, table, dress, nothing spared, I assure you, and yet all conducted with the utmost economy and prudence. I am sure Mrs. Dursley related to me an instance of management in my young intended relative, that is quite surprising, and reflects the highest honour on her mother for bringing her up so properly. Her second brother, Mr. William Dursley, has lately been settled as an attorney. She undertook to keep his house, and never had man a more notable, careful housekeeper. Her economy extended even to the servants puddings, which she now never permits to be made with either milk or sugar. She said they were just as good without; and milk at three-pence a quart, and sugar at nine-pence a pound, were too dear for servants. You may be sure they did not like such arrangements, but Louisa magnanimously persevered; for besides her

conviction that they were equally good without the articles for which they contended, and her opinion that servants ought not to be pampered, as they often are, Mr. William Dursley kindly authorized her to appropriate to her own dress, whatever she could so judiciously save out of the sum he allowed for the expenses of his household; and her mother tells me, she has already accumulated above thirty pounds, without in the smallest degree detracting from the comforts of her brother, or injuring that appearance he must maintain at his own table."

Felicia could scarcely repress the disgust with which she listened to this mean detail of ambition and avarice, of selfishness and inhumanity; hardly forbear expressing her surprise and contempt at the flagrant self-deception which could dignify with the name of a virtue an unfeeling abridgment of the comforts of her dependents, that it might administer to her own personal gratification and inordinate vanity. She had no idea of complimenting sacrifices made, not at Miss Dursley's own expense, but that of others, and springing from no desire to conform to her brother's nar-

row income, but a selfish determination of depriving her fellow creatures of the few comforts which devolved to their station in life, in order to procure some unnecessary luxuries attached to her own; and her profound silence, together with the turn of her face, were so explanatory of her secret sentiments on this wonderful instance of her "dear young relative's" extreme notability, that burning with indignation, Mrs. Hustleton left the house, eager to communicate to her *coterie*, not only the ill-success of her inquiries, and particulars of her interview, but that Miss Leycester, to her astonishment, openly vindicated her sister's fall from honour; and moreover, from various things that dropped during their conversation, she felt convinced had just the same expensive extravagant ideas as her sister.

"It was dreadful to see her callousness—to find, with such a warning before her eyes, she had no more notion of economy. Well, after all, she really thought (she was sorry to say it) Mrs. Evanmore was the best of the two, at least she was the most open; and she had such a hatred of hypocrisy, that she must say ingenuousness covered a great many faults in her eyes.

Daily she thanked Heaven that things had turned out as they had. She would not have had Mr. Osborne marry into such a family for millions. Miss Dursley had no titled relations to boast of, but, thank Heaven, she was one of an honourable race, however. No adultresses, no spendthrifts in their family; and all her relations so good, so esteemed, so prudent. For her part, she was amazed, when men married, they did not oftener think of the lady's connexions. But young men would be young men to the end of the chapter; and if a face pleased them, they regarded nothing else: it was, therefore, the more gratifying to their parents and friends, when they did make a proper selection—when all these advantages were united in one person."

In these sapient remarks all Lady Wyedale's acquaintance cordially united; and before the elopement of Mrs. Evanmore ceased to excite any further interest, gave way in short to newer topics of scandal, a stranger would have been puzzled to decide which of the family groupe was, on this lamentable occasion, deemed the most deserving of obloquy—Lady Wyedale—

Felicia — Evanmore — Lord Edgermond — or Rosalind—so unwilling did they feel to leave any member without his or her proportionate share of blame.

CHAPTER III.

One fatal remembrance—one sorrow that throws
Its bleak shade alike o'er our joys and our woes—
To which life nothing darker or brighter can bring,
For which joy has no balm—and affliction no sting.

Moore.

EVANMORE's first impulse was, to pursue the fugitives to the Continent, whither he soon learnt they were fled ; and after writing a hasty note to Felicia, entreating her to call from time to time in Baker-street, to see that his deserted infant was properly treated by his domestics, he commenced his wretched pursuit. He travelled without allowing himself more than a few hours for rest and refreshment, till he reached Paris : there, after great difficulty, he traced them to retired lodgings in the suburbs of the city ; and with frightful agitation made

his way to the rooms he supposed they occupied. They were empty; and in answer to his vehement inquiries, he was told they had removed the evening before. His informant could give him no further intelligence; and here he lost all clue to their retreat. They travelled under the assumed names of Captain and Mrs. Montressor, and took so many precautions to prevent detection, that he saw it was futile to persist in his intention of seeking them. Fatigued and broken-hearted, he returned to town, and abandoned himself to the despair that almost threatened to overwhelm both his health and reason.

When roused from the first torpor of grief, he instituted proceedings in Doctors' Commons, and his next steps were, to dismiss a part of his establishment, sell his carriages and horses; and, as soon as he could find an eligible tenant for his house, to retire into lodgings with his child. On examining his affairs, he discovered, as is generally the case after making such investigations, that he was much more deeply involved than he had surmised, and that years of rigid persevering economy would scarcely enable him to liquidate the many debts thus

wantonly contracted, and to appropriate something for the support of his child when she would be deprived of his protection. This was a subject too painful to pursue. Evanmore saw the folly of which he had been guilty, in not looking forward to the certain termination of the boundless expenses to which he had tacitly consented ; but still he had not energy or strength of mind sufficient to profit by the bitter lesson he had received. He was determined to sue for a divorce from his guilty ungrateful wife, and equally resolved to wipe away a part of his dishonour by challenging her betrayer the instant he revisited his native country. The consequences of this step he would not contemplate. Sometimes a sudden remembrance, that if he should fall, his Rosa would be a destitute orphan—should he survive, it might be with hands embrued in the blood of a fellow-creature, shot a pang through his heart, acute as that which is inflicted by the hand of an assassin, and he would strike his forehead in a paroxysm of agony ; but his purpose was never shaken. The crime of duelling, considered abstractedly, he abhorred. He knew it was in express contradiction to the laws of

God and man, though varnished over by custom, and supported by the flimsy arguments of false honour; but early habits, early impressions, made him incapable of stemming what he conceived was the general opinion of fashionable people. And, as the deaf adder which refused to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely, Evanmore smothered his scruples as they arose, and refused to listen to the small still voice within him, which whispered, that the tarnished honour of his wife could not be wiped out by the blood of her seducer—that the anguish he now felt would be little allayed by rushing unbidden into the presence of his offended Maker; or by sending thither, covered with crimes, the foul destroyer of his peace.

While such were the occupations and reflections of the more than widowed Evanmore, time flew on; but no event of the least importance chequered the monotonous existence of Lady Wyedale and her dejected relative. Felicia, indeed, recovered from the shock her feelings had sustained, and resumed her former pursuits with accustomed energy, but her spirits seemed gone. Lady Wyedale, still more anxious she

should form some connexion, whose brilliancy might cast this spot on the house of Leycester into the shade, became hourly solicitous that she should mix more with society, and enter more into the amusements of the world. She would not, could not, see, that dissipation had been the rock on which Rosalind's fair bark had split. But Felicia had never felt any real happiness in such scenes, and now loathed them as the *ignes fatui*, the wandering lights, whose bright, but delusive beams, united to a wretched education, had led her misguided Rosalind into darkness and misery. She experienced no cessation of her cares, but in unceasing employment—no pleasure, but that sickly gleam which the knowledge of Evanmore's struggles to render himself independent gave her. Yes, she had another and a purer, a more refined source of consolation. She let not selfish grief so absorb her mind as to forget the claims of the afflicted ; and in ministering to those yet more wretched than herself, she found a sweet and sure alleviation of her own sorrows. Still the hand of adversity pressed heavily on her ; and when the period approached which was to give to the world the minute

particulars of Rosalind's deviation from virtue, she felt every feeling sharpened to such poignant anguish, that she entreated Lady Wyedale would remove from town, and quit for awhile the scene and the theatre of their mutual shame.

At first Lady Wyedale resented this petition as an unpardonable liberty, and a perfectly unnecessary step; but, after some reflection, and narrowly watching the solemn countenances of her acquaintance as it drew near, she began to think it would be rather awkward to be in London while the trial was pending. But to own that she had been overcome, had yielded to the judicious suggestion of another, was a degradation to which she would not have submitted for the universe; and after some reflection, she resolved to proceed to the Lodge without a moment's delay, and allege indispensable business as her excuse. She had a few weeks before been informed, that her steward was in a declining state of health, and solicited to appoint a successor in case of his decease. She had not previously intended to do more than invest his nephew in his honours, by letter, when the event should happen; but she now seized on this circumstance as a plea

for her journey, and two days afterwards Felicia and herself set off for the Lodge.

To Felicia this unexpected arrangement was one, of all others, the best calculated to cheer her at this period of sorrow. She had recently received letters replete with kindness from both Mrs. and Miss Berkely, indirectly sympathizing with her on the heavy affliction she was labouring under. She knew their opinion of her would not be lowered by this misconduct of her sister; and as these and a thousand other pleasing reflections presented themselves to her imagination, her spirits revived so much, that again a long dormant suspicion that she secretly liked Mr. Berkely, soured Lady Wye-dale's temper beyond its customary acidity. Her attentions were daily becoming more necessary to her: she had lately begun to think that if she really would not marry, she might preserve the consequence of the Leycesters by living single; and once or twice, too, she had thought, that if the thing could be brought about, she should not be sorry, at least not oppose the attachment, which she felt convinced James Leycester entertained for her.

James Leycester was one of those quiet,

even-tempered, unpresuming men peculiarly calculated to *slide* into a fortune. He had seen, and still continued to see, that Lady Wyedale did not intend to make him her heir, without betraying the smallest apparent displeasure. His thoughts on the subject were best known to himself, and, he felt, best kept so. That warmth and impetuosity which a generous mind so often evinces under unjust treatment, he had too much policy to manifest; for he had already learnt enough in life's hard school to know, that injuries complained of seldom produce any thing but augmented unkindness, nor are unfrequently attended by more serious consequences; for, anxious to justify what has given offence both to conscience and the world, a harsh relation is often converted into a bitter enemy, whose eager desire to vindicate self, injures us in the estimation of those who were originally inclined to view us with regard. Mr. Leycester was not insensible to his claims as her heir-at-law, only nephew, too, on the male line, or forgetful of the cruel struggles which she had inhumanly left his father to make with a large family, while she was rolling in wealth. But such re-

miniscences, he rightly judged, were best consigned to the recesses of his own breast. He was now in full chase of something—and as the least betrayal of his feelings he knew would ensure him nothing, he smiled and smiled, and bowed and bowed, with the same politeness he would have used had he viewed his Lady Aunt with kindlier sentiments. He took care not to neglect his business in the pursuit; and as civility costs very little, he felt that, if disappointed at last, he should have sustained no loss. Her friendship was a present honour, her countenance might be a future advantage; and should Felicia displease her, which he had sagacity enough to foresee was by no means improbable, the estates of Sir Thomas Wyedale would, in all human probability, become his. Influenced by these prudent considerations, he resolved to bury the long cherished resentment of his family in his own heart, and patiently persevere. When first we embark in any interesting pursuit, we seldom propose following it with improper eagerness, or employing undue means to accomplish our end. But as “the chariot-wheel becomes warm by its own motion,” we cannot be too

scrupulous in daily examining whether we exceed not our original intention—whether we do not grow so anxious to achieve our wishes, as to seek their attainments by less virtuous paths than those we first prescribed to ourselves. Mr. Leycester was no sensitive plant, shrinking from the fear of doing wrong—the apprehension of injuring others ; but when he first came to town he simply intended not to defeat his own views by idle petulance, or useless resentment. He thought he had the best right to Lady Wyedale's fortune, but he did not purpose to oust his fair competitors by any underhand measures. As, however, he became more alive to the charms of wealth and power, he grew less fastidious. To coax and cajole the old woman he soon learnt to think perfectly justifiable, and his desire to fall in with her sentiments, united to a strong secret personal dislike to Rosalind, whose satiric wit had made him her decided enemy, induced him to think there was nothing wrong in relating every little anecdote he could gather to her disadvantage. She was his most formidable opponent ; and after persuading himself she had justly forfeited Lady Wyedale's favour by her disobedience

and ingratitude, he laboured hard to widen the breach between them—much harder, indeed, than was at all requisite, for Rosalind had an implacable foe in her Ladyship's own heart that rendered the exertions of any other quite unnecessary. The manœuvres he directed against his other competitor, were conducted with more ability, and he had some internal fears, less honour. It was his original intention to endeavour to win her affections, and thus make security doubly secure ; but shrewd and penetrating, he soon saw that he had an unacknowledged rival in Mr. Berkely ; and, though perhaps unknown to herself, that Felicia's feelings towards him were of such a nature as to render every attempt to gain her heart abortive. He therefore changed his plan of operation ; and by affording Mr. Berkely every opportunity of pressing his advantage, hoped Felicia would become so much attached to him as to brave Lady Wyedale's evident dislike to the idea of her marrying him. He delivered her message, previous to her journey to Weymouth, with a smile and a manner, that swelled Mr. Berkely's bosom with delight ; but though he inferred from it that Mr. Leycester suspected his cousin

was far from indifferent to him, still, with the timidity of a modest man and a lover, he did not feel quite assured she yet entertained so strong a regard for him as to accept his hand in opposition to the will of her aunt, in whom he perceived he had a determined and inveterate enemy. He consequently forbore to follow her to Weymouth; but while he preserved that caution which his mother had recommended, he omitted no opportunity of keeping alive that favourable impression which he hoped she had conceived of himself and family. He wrote to thank her for her kind remembrances conveyed to him by her cousin Mr. Leycester, expressed his unfeigned regret at the suddenness of their separation, and his hopes that in the bustling lively scene to which she was going, she would sometimes think of her friends at the Grove.

Felicia blushed when she received the letter, and once an indirect suspicion that he loved her, floated like a bright vision before her eyes. But it was transient as bright. "She should be sorry if he regarded her with stronger feelings than those she cherished for him. She esteemed him the most amiable man in the

world, but she could never love again. It would be treating him ill to receive his attentions, when she did not mean to encourage his addresses; wrong to accept his hand, when her heart could never accompany the gift." In pursuance of these reflections, she simply replied to his letter in the postscript of one addressed to his mother. But Mr. Berkely was not so much discouraged by it as she imagined he would be. Her manner, her looks, her tones, when she spoke to him during his last visit, united to Mr. Leycester's while delivering her farewell message, all conspired to make him feel assured she did not see him with entire indifference; and regarding her postscript as emanating from that womanly delicacy which refuses to be won unsought, he was contriving another visit to town, which he hoped would terminate with the completion of his wishes, when he was shocked by seeing in the papers of the day that Rosalind had eloped with Lord Edgermond. To him the information was productive of scarcely less regret than to Felicia.

He had, as she often hinted, once seen her with sentiments bordering on attachment; but ere the flame which her consummate loveliness

had kindled, burnt with brightness or warmth, it had been extinguished by that knowledge of her character which the close intimacy he was seeking, necessarily gave him : and with one sigh he had dismissed her from his breast for ever, just before Felicia left Leominster. Mr. Berkely was no stoic, insensible to the multiplied charms of blooming youth, the scintillations of wit, the dazzling power of beauty ; but his just and well-poised mind rendered only unto Cæsar what was Cæsar's due. He knew such possessions, however fascinating, could not give to the many-coloured scenes of life a pleasing tint; could not disarm disappointment of its sting; could not rob the grave of its victory : and he turned from the glittering Rosalind with blended feelings of pity, sorrow, and disappointment.

As Felicia imagined, the misconduct of her sister had not thrown a shade on her. She reigned bright in his estimation as before : he knew they had not imbibed the same ideas, the same lessons, the same principles, but he deeply regretted that she should be the sister of an adulteress ; and he knew her ardent attachment to this lovely though frail being, would render

the blow doubly afflictive to her pure bosom. He felt also very anxious to learn what would be her behaviour under this calamitous event, whether she would continue to notice her, whether she would visit Mr. Evanmore during her absence. Mr. Berkely, in short, was a man, and a lover; and not so much of the latter as to be ignorant that the object of his admiration was—a woman erring like all the rest of her fellow-creatures, and once devotedly attached to the unhappy Evanmore. He knew that pity is a great friend to love; and while he could have pledged his life on Felicia's purity of mind, he was not without uneasy fears—that this bitter stroke of misfortune might not contribute to strengthen former feelings in Evanmore's favour, revive the recollection of his virtues, and awaken a sentiment of regret for his solitary state, which might render her more averse to pledging her vows to another.

CHAPTER IV.

Acquaint thyself with God, if thou would'st taste
His works. Admitted once to his embrace,
Thou shalt perceive that thou wast blind before :
Thine eye shall be instructed ; and thine heart,
Made pure, shall relish, with divine delight
Till then unfehl, what hands divine have wrought.

Cowper.

THE Lodge was about three miles from Elm-grove, and its stately plantations met those of Mr. Berkely. When the carriage reached the little eminence where she had stopped on leaving the Grove, Felicia eagerly leaned out of the window, and caught another lingering look at objects so dear to her.

A blooming Spring had embellished its charms, and never did the residence of her friends appear so full of beauties. The trees had put on their loveliest dress—the blushing

bosom of the daisy mingled with the yellow flowers of the gold-cup, and the short green grassy velvet of the verdant meads. The hedges were white with the fragrant blossoms of the hawthorn. Here and there the dark purple of the violet peeped from amid the pale green leaves of the strawberry just bursting from the earth, or contrasted its regal tints with the soft hues of the starry primrose. The air was perfumed with the sweet scent of the lilac and apple-blossom, whose deep red and white flowers gave a rich and lively colour to the scene. The path through which they travelled bounded a part of the domain, and was shaded by detached groups of trees, the luxuriant growth of ages, interspersed with the silver-birch, acacia, and laburnum, whose feathery branches trembled in the breeze.

But these were not the only objects of Felicia's admiration. Sometimes she obtained a glimpse of the village beyond—its little stream gushing and bubbling over its pebbly bed, or pouring its clear waters amid the fertile meads, over whose green lawns the shadows of the oak and elm threw a softened beauty—its thatched roofs gay with moss and dotted with

tufts of stonecrop—its latticed windows peeping through the light foliage of the honeysuckle or jessamine, and flashing bright in the morning sun—its blue smoke curling against the thicket—its smiling gardens—its little inhabitants sporting before its lowly doors, their infantine merriment mingling with the loud bark of the protecting dog, and the shrill crowing of the stately cock, possessed even more charms for her.

The Lodge was a large handsome brick building, replete with every convenience that luxury or fashion could require; but it wanted that something for which foreigners have no word, but which is so well known to the English, by the simple term, comfort.

Felicia rose early the ensuing morning; and after taking a ramble in the adjacent grounds, felt herself become more pleased with her new residence. Perhaps, a portion of her regard might spring from discovering that she could obtain a bird's-eye-view of the Grove from an elevated part of the plantations. She longed to see and embrace its dear inhabitants; and when two or three days had elapsed without receiving the call she had expected, almost

began to think them tardy in paying their compliments to Lady Wyedale, negligent of herself. Every rap at the door startled her, and every distant noise was converted by fancy into the rumbling of a carriage, or the sound of a horse's foot.

"I wonder the Berkelys are so long in waiting upon you!" said she, one day to Lady Wyedale. "I fear they are indisposed."

"Long!" repeated Lady Wyedale, "I never thought of them till you mentioned their names; and I am sure I hope I shall not be bored by a visit very soon. At all events, I shall be safe till I have been to church, if they understand propriety."

This reply relieved Felicia from those indistinct feelings of apprehension which she was beginning to entertain, that illness or some other cause might have contributed to prevent the Berkelys from paying them a visit. She knew they were by no means on a very friendly footing with Lady Wyedale; and as the ensuing day was Sunday, she anticipated seeing them with renewed pleasure. The morning, however, proved very rainy. Lady Wyedale did not choose to brave the cold; and the incle-

mency of the weather was indirectly alleged as a reason for not ordering the carriage for Felicia's use. Felicia saw the real motive; but she neither felt extremely mortified nor extremely angry. She always regretted when she could not attend divine service twice a day, and when within a short distance never permitted the weather to prevent her from thus testifying her willing obedience to the law of her Creator; but she could always spend a wet Sunday piously at home: she therefore expressed no uneasiness at this arrangement; and, after a day which was only too short for its many interesting employments, she closed her eyes in innocence and peace.

A tempestuous night was succeeded by a morn of such clear unruffled beauty, that as she looked out of her window she could not help wishing it was in her power to walk to Elm-grove. She was not obliged to be ceremonious, ought not, indeed, to stand on the punctilio of a visit with Mrs. Berkely; and after some little mental struggles between her unwillingness to ask what might displease Lady Wye-dale, and her wish to see the Berkelys, she descended to the breakfast parlour, resolved to

wait patiently till she could visit them without provoking her ready wrath. Her Ladyship was not there, and she learnt from her maid, would not rise till dinner, having a slight cold. The temptation was too strong to be resisted ; and after begging a few minutes' audience with her aunt, she stated her obligations to the family, and her desire to be allowed to visit them that morning. Her request was so reasonable, and urged with so much respectful solicitude, it was at length sullenly granted. Her wish to *walk* to the Grove, was, however, refused ; and with a view to convince Mr. Berkely of his presumption, her Ladyship ordered that she should be driven in the new carriage she had just purchased, escorted by half her household. Felicia loathed this parade, and felt that the Berkelys would have deemed her more a friend had she walked under the convoy of her Ladyship's favourite spaniel ; but she could not resist what seemed so purely the effect of kindness ; and thus attended, she set off to the Grove.

When the carriage stopped, a servant informed her the family were all out, but dispersed about the grounds ; and till he could

summon them, she alighted and walked into the drawing-room. It was just as they had left it. Mrs. Berkely's knitting hung suspended in a bag of no fashionable dimensions from the back of her arm-chair ; the table was covered with a variety of little caps and frocks, which the Miss Berkelys were manufacturing for the use of their poor neighbours ; and near them lay an open volume, with Mr. Berkely's pencil between the leaves : a long paragraph appeared strongly marked. There was nothing treacherous or improper in her looking at a work thus exposed to the eyes of servants ; and unable to resist the curiosity she felt to learn the subject of his reflections, she hastily walked to the table. It was a volume of the works of a late lamented author :* he had touched on the subject of female education ; and the following lines were those Mr. Berkely had inclosed with brackets :

“ Reforms, however, in religion, can never
“ be needless, whether for men or women. Let
“ the latter then, since their improvement is in
“ question, more seriously consider its inex-

* John Bowdler, junior, esq.

“ pressible importance, and live more entirely
“ under the influence of its precepts. Let
“ them deeply and practically be persuaded,
“ that the favour of God is far above every
“ earthly blessing; that one act of charity or
“ self-denial, one real exercise of humility or
“ devotion, is better worth than the most flat-
“ tering display of wit and accomplishments,
“ with all the brilliancy of beauty to lend them
“ lustre. So shall the loveliness of woman be
“ twice lovely: so shall the evening as well as
“ the morn of life, shine with unclouded bright-
“ ness: and He, ‘ before whose face the
“ ‘ Heavens and earth shall flee away,’ smile
“ on them in that awful hour, when the charms
“ of the fair, and the wisdom of the wise, shall
“ alike be vain, and holiness alone retain its
“ value.”

Felicia perused these remarks with a sensation she could not describe. Rosalind, rich in every thing but virtue, swam before her eyes, and she doubted not, when he marked these observations, that Mr. Berkely had been equally struck by a passage which so forcibly delineated the inefficacy of beauty or talents, to confer honour or happiness on their gifted

possessor. She was still standing near the table, absorbed in thought, when Mr. Berkely suddenly entered. Her hand yet rested on the volume, and her eye yet glanced on the page when he appeared. Their eyes met—her's were suffused in tears; and conscious of the cause of her emotion, Mr. Berkely was unable to articulate the welcome he wished to offer. Mrs. Berkely interrupted this painful interview. Her face bespoke her real sympathy, and soothed, yet affected, by her silent commiseration, Felicia turned to a window, and wept aloud. Mr. Berkely left the room—her distress he could not endure to witness; and relieved by his absence, Felicia soon recovered from her agitation. Mrs. Berkely did not make the most distant allusion to her sister, for she felt this was a sorrow that admits of no consolation. She spoke only on general topics, and intimated her hopes that Felicia would be a frequent guest at the Grove during her residence in the country. Felicia could not promise that she would; but she expressed so sincere a desire to be their visitor, that as he handed her into the carriage, Mr. Berkely ventured, for the first time, to hint his hopes

that she would permit him to wait upon her at the Lodge. Felicia readily gave her assent ; but hurried by the remembrance of their singular meeting, she did not attach to this petition any thing of a serious nature till she reached home, and in the privacy of her apartment was scrupulously recalling the events of the day. She then became sensible that he had asked, and she granted, what probably meant more than a simple request, that he might renew his former calls. She blushed deeply ; but the blush was soon displaced by the recollection that she could not return his affection ; had, perhaps, unguardedly given him reason to think she should ; and unwilling to inflict a moment's pain on such a heart by refusing his attentions, fearful she had acted improperly in encouraging them, she remained agitated and perplexed during many days. Her embarrassments were then relieved by a note from Miss Berkely, announcing that her brother was gone to visit Mr. Andrew Berkely, who was very dangerously ill. A few days removed her anxiety for his life ; but he continued so ill, he would not part with his brother. Felicia tried to believe that the regret she felt

at this unexpected separation from Mr. Berkeley, solely proceeded from its distressing cause; and ere she could analyze the nature of those feelings she wished to ascribe to friendliness, Mr. Evanmore's cause came on, and every other thought was absorbed in the overwhelming interest she took in such a trial. She had now but one fear, that Rosalind might appear to have sought her ruin; but one hope, that when the tie that bound her to Evanmore was dissolved, she might become the wife of her seducer. For some weeks she was destined to endure all the vicissitudes of these opposite emotions. The trial was then decided—Rosalind's imprudence and Evanmore's supineness, were so manifest, that very small damages were given; and as the paper fell out of her hands which contained every disgraceful particular, Felicia felt an additional pang from the apprehension, that he who had taken so little pains to shield his partner in guilt from obloquy, would be little likely to raise her from the station she had justly forfeited to his own elevated rank.

“Sin has many shades,” and though no gloss, no palliation can render its aspect fair, there

are degrees even in actual vice. Felicia had clung to the hope that Rosalind would not have appeared an easy conquest; and when this solitary consolation was wrested from her, she felt every previous wound aggravated and increased. Covered with shame and grief, she hid herself from all society: even that of the Berkelys seemed unproductive of pleasure. To a certain degree she had fallen—sunk with her sister—and after three months spent in solitude and sorrow, she returned with her aunt to town, careless where she passed her embittered existence.

Mr. Berkely paid her a visit a few days after her arrival; but it was undistinguished excepting by a manner so respectful, that it almost amounted to formality. His brother was now a convalescent, and he talked of returning to the Grove in the space of a week.

A few days subsequent he called again to bid her adieu. Lady Wyedale was from home, and they sat nearly half an hour alone. Still Mr. Berkely hinted not the remotest wish that their friendship should change into a dearer intimacy: he seemed, indeed, too much out of spirits for such feelings to have a place in his

bosom, and Felicia saw him depart with feelings of sorrow she vainly tried to disguise from herself. While, however, she admitted their existence, she deceived herself as to their origin. That he had once seen her with interest—had once intended to solicit her affections, she felt assured. What then withheld him from declaring himself? It was her sister's disgrace, her sister's violation of all the sacred bounds of honour and decorum. He did not, indeed, censure her; his dejection evinced how much he pitied her; but he had too nice a sense of delicacy to unite himself to a woman thus unhappily situated. Should not Lord Edgermond marry Rosalind, what would be her fate? such a one as no man of his principles could wish to be allied to, however distantly. Yes, it was certainly as she imagined, for when Mr. Berkely hinted at his attachment just previous to his visit to his brother, the extent of Rosalind's disgrace was not exposed. His brother, a grave clergyman, and his sister-in-law a woman of strict virtue, had endeavoured to persuade him he would derive neither respect nor happiness from such a connexion, and he had determined to abandon it. “ And he has

a just right to do so," pursued Felicia, her eyes filling with tears, " he had not gone too far to withdraw with honour, and indeed it is better, much better that he should not have solicited my hand ; I must have declined it. I only lament that my situation is such that he cannot address me." She dashed away the tears that rolled over her face, and determined to think of him no more. Disappointed in her own views of happiness, lowered in the opinion of the world by the depravity of her sister, her spirits gone, her respectability impaired, a single life was the only sphere which she could now fill with any degree of propriety or probability of happiness. She was a solitary, unconnected being, torn from all those she had ever loved, and condemned to journey through life destitute of those endearing ties and charms that brighten its dreary paths. " But Thy will, not mine, be done !" she said, silently folding her hands ; and though a tear accompanied this devout acquiescence in the mandate of her Maker, a holy calm overspread her spirits, a pious serenity again resumed that place in her bosom, which had so lately been usurped by grief and despondency.

CHAPTER V.

I wander through the night,
When all but me take rest,
And the Moon's soft beams fall piteously
Upon my troubled breast.

Joanna Baillie.

SIX dreary months had the laws of his country separated Evanmore from his faithless wife, when he learnt that Lord Edgermond was arrived in town from Italy. He was alone, and the fate of Rosalind seemed involved in darkness. On one point, however, the fashionable world seemed agreed, that she neither was nor would be, his wife.

Evanmore felt his thirst of vengeance increased by this intelligence. His peace, his happiness, his honour, had then been sacrificed to gratify an ephemeral passion—the woman

he had been so proud to call his, was not then worthy to share the sullied lustre to which she might have been raised by him, for whom she had sacrificed all that rendered her estimable among her fellow-creatures.

Anxious for an early meeting, he waited upon a gentleman with whom he had become intimate since his residence in London, and requested he would be the bearer of a challenge to Lord Edgermond.

Lord Edgermond was so perfectly conversant with the established rules of fashionable life, that he was fully prepared for Evanmore's thus seeking to redress the wrongs he had heaped upon him ; and so much a man of honour and feeling, that he would have considered himself disgraced, had he declined the opportunity of shedding the blood of him whose life he had rendered previously miserable. The challenge was instantly accepted ; and, after securing the attendance of a military officer of high rank, he dressed himself for a party, where he knew the seduction of the wife, and the murder of the husband, would be regarded as instances of gallantry and bravery, reflecting equal honour on his powers and principles.

Lord Edgermond was from home when Evanmore's friend called at his hotel; and it was not till late in the day that their meeting the ensuing morning at six o'clock, behind Chalk-farm, was finally decided upon.

Evanmore's affairs were still in a very perplexed state, and anxious to make every arrangement in his power, to satisfy the claims of his creditors, he sat up till midnight. All was then adjusted, and he threw himself upon his bed to obtain a few hours' repose: he slept, but his sleep was perturbed; and, unrefreshed, he soon arose. He hastily dressed himself, and went into the library. The fire he had left the preceding evening still glimmered in the grate: he had one letter to write, and it was one of such a character that he knew not how to commence it; while he felt every moment was precious—that he now possessed leisure which might never more be his. His hand rested on his writing-desk—a few hours hence, and it might be nerveless in death. He thought of his infant—there was death in the thought. He seized a pen, and in a few hurried lines dictated his will, together with some general instructions to the guardian of his child. Again

he paused ; and, wrapped in gloomy meditations, remained transfixed to his chair, his eyes bent in vacuity upon this, perhaps, last memorial of his wishes, when he was roused from this trance of deep and agonizing reflection by hearing the watch cry, “ past four o’clock.”

“ Ha !” he said, starting, “ have I so little time to devote to thee ?” and drawing his writing-desk closer to him, he addressed a letter, long and heart-rending, to Felicia. He implored her to accept the office of guardian to his child, to become the executrix of his will. He had no friends to whose care he dare entrust her, none on whose honour he could so implicitly rely. The *father* had now touched on a subject whose interest banished every other ; and he continued to write, reckless of all but that he was recommending his child to her protection, till memory suddenly reminded him that he had in his possession a miniature of Felicia. The suddenness of their separation had prevented its return at the time they mutually resigned their engagement ; and his secret unwillingness to think they had indeed parted for ever, deterred him from sending it back. After he became the husband of Rosa-

lind, he had once or twice thought he ought not to retain such a pledge of his former attachment to her sister; but the fear of inflicting a deeper wound on her feelings, an unwillingness to speak on such a topic to Rosalind, all conspired to deter him from executing the intention; and it now occurred to him, that it might probably revive feelings in Felicia's bosom, which it would no longer be criminal to indulge when their object was low in the grave—might yet more interest her in behalf of his Rosa, should his approaching duel make her an orphan. He rose from the table as this idea suggested itself to his mind; and in a private drawer of his escrutoir, sought for this memento of the ardent attachment which had once existed between them. A feeling of uncontrollable anguish swelled his bosom, and grasping a miniature case half-covered with papers, he resolved once more to contemplate the features of her he had adored—yet deserted —her whose character had hourly risen in his esteem, who was the last friend he possessed on earth, who would extend to his destitute child that protection of which her mother had twice robbed her. He tore it open, and Rosalind

glowing in radiant beauty met his eyes. She was in her masquerade habit, and the power of her delineator had given to her transcendent features, more than mortal loveliness. With phrenzied violence he dashed the glittering vision from his hands, and clasping them in agony together, rushed from the spot where it lay, with the recoiling step of one who fears to tread on a gilded serpent. Unconscious where he went, he found himself near one of the windows. A feverish heat burnt in his throbbing temples, and he opened the window that he might catch the reviving breath of dawn.

It was yet scarcely light; not a star illumined the dark vault of heaven, and a piercing wind was driving the wild and gloomy clouds of a Winter's morning from before the cold face of the expiring moon. A few of her cheerless rays beamed on the dusky windows, and threw a sickly gleam over the water which some heavy rain had left in the desolate road.

It was that silent hour, when the busy multitudes who throng its streets were sunk to rest. The sons of labour had not yet risen to seek a scanty subsistence, and the children of fortune

had just left the glittering scenes of earthly enjoyment—not a sound met his ear, but the shrill whistling of the wind—the hasty foot of some solitary pedestrian—or the melancholy cry of the watch. Yet the dreary scene possessed a dismal charm for Evanmore. It was in unison with his mind—it seemed the hushed repose of bitter disappointment. The wind blew gratefully over his beating temples, and he lingered to catch its refreshing breeze, till he was roused by a noise behind him so strange—so mournful—so hollow—he started with instinctive terror: he turned, and saw that the wind had blown down a fire-screen that hung suspended over an uncovered harp, which stood at the extremity of the library. It was Rosalind's; and as it glided over the resounding chords, it seemed to Evanmore like the wild requiem which superstition might pour out as the knell of a departing spirit. A cold chilly sensation crept over his frame, and he quitted the window to finish his letter to Felicia. With averted eyes he passed the miniature of Rosalind; and taking Felicia's from the recess in which he had placed it, inclosed it unopened with his letter. He made no allusion

to the past ; but in tremulous characters, he wrote on its envelope, “ Let the remembrance of the time when I deserved this, be mingled with pity and forgiveness ; and oh, teach my child to resemble thee !” the window was yet open, and a low wind moaned through the strings of the harp, as he folded this last memorial of his love for her and his child. It sounded like the sigh of some one in distress. Rosalind, deserted by her betrayer, a prey to shame and disappointment, rose to his imagination ; and a sensation of pity, for the first time, shot through his lacerated heart.

“ Shall I mourn the blasted ambition of her who has destroyed me !” he said. “ No,” and stern resentment flashed from his eyes. “ Let her feel as I have felt.” Again the breeze swept the strings of the harp. He started — was it an illusion of his senses disturbed by the awful situation in which he stood ! No, once more a wild and feeble melody breathed along its quivering chords. He trembled, and cast a fearful glance around—all was still, save a few neglected shrubs, dark and withered, that gently waved with a sad and mournful noise against the window : they were Rosa-

lind's—"Rosalind!" he frantically exclaimed. No voice replied to his, and he shuddered at the dreary sensation that followed his phrenzied cry. No wife—no Rosalind was there : he felt he was indeed alone—deserted—abandoned—Oh, the horror of that moment! He hastily rose from his chair. His feelings were too highly wrought to endure his situation, and he determined to seek his child, imprint on her lips a father's last fond kiss. As he rapidly brushed by the table, he threw down a large volume; he would have passed it, but by the light he bore in his unsteady hand, he saw it was his mother's Bible. He stooped involuntarily to take it up—it was open—and as he placed it on the table he saw,

"Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." He started, and with a deep groan sunk again on his chair. The unction he had before laid to his soul—the flimsy, yet specious arguments with which he had hitherto lulled the reproaches of his conscience, no longer possessed power to deceive him—"Could he hope for that pardon from Omnipotence, which he withheld from a fellow worm? Could he hope to be received into the mansions of the blessed, who

left this world a victim to his own passions ? Could he dare to anticipate future happiness, covered with the blood of a fellow-creature ? Could he any longer aspire to protection or acceptance, who had impiously dared to oppose the revealed will of his offended Maker, snatched from his almighty hands the privilege of avenging his wrongs ? Could he recede —could he decline to meet Lord Edgermond,” he asked himself, in a faltering voice, as these reflections crowded to his palsied mind. “ No. If he were to draw back from that meeting he had solicited, he should be branded as a coward and a bully. Even the desertion of his wife might be ascribed to her personal contempt for his character. The finger of scorn would be pointed against him, the glance of derision or contumely would ever meet his eye. No, retreat was impossible ; and why should he thus add bitterness to the cup of misery he was compelled to drink ?” But vainly he tried to reconcile his conscience to the step he was taking—the doctrines of Christianity with those of fashionable life. “ My kingdom is not of this world,” flashed on his senses, and the words he had so singularly seen, “ *Vengeance is*

mine, I will repay," seemed written in characters of fire on his brain.

With just sentiments but wavering resolution, no one can be truly good. Evanmore was incapable of boldly pursuing that path which can alone lead to happiness. He had *personal courage*, but not *mental intrepidity*: he was deficient in that noble firmness which gives dignity to principle, and inflexibility to virtue; and in the perilous hour of trial, he sunk a victim to that temptation against which he had no real shield of defence.

With agitated steps he sought the apartment of his child—some minutes elapsed ere he could open the door, and glide to her little couch. She was fast buried in the balmy slumbers of careless childhood. Her dark shining hair curled in luxuriant disorder over her ivory forehead, and long silken lashes rested on her rosy cheek. Her dimpled hands were laid on her guiltless bosom, and the smile that half played over her ruby lip, spoke innocence and peace.

"And I was once like thee!" he thought. "Oh, that I had never survived that blissful period!" He knelt by her side, and as he bent

his head to imprint a kiss on her downy cheek, scalding tears gushed from his eyes. He raised his hands in silent prayer.

“ Oh, Father !” he breathed, “ bless this helpless babe, and equally preserve her from the faults of both her parents ! Oh, visit not on her their sins ! Oh, pity and protect her whom they have abandoned ! When her father and her mother have alike deserted her, be Thou her shield ! raise her up some safer, firmer guardian, who shall never leave her nor forsake her !”

It was the cry of nature—the voice of *genuine* supplication ; and, though clouded by frailty and error, it reached the throne of Mercy.

A loud rap interrupted these intercessions—a deep groan burst from his lips, and starting from his knees, he fled from the presence of his child.

He had scarcely gained the library, and acquired that serenity of manner which it was so necessary to assume, when his second was ushered into the room.

“ Ha ! my good fellow, glad to see you are ready—been preparing all things against the worst, I perceive. Well, I'll take care and fulfil

all your wishes." He seated himself near the table, and taking out a case of pistols, examined the flints, snapped them; and, after this investigation of their merits, pronounced they were the "very best in Christendom."

Evanmore felt an involuntary sensation of disgust. It seemed almost insult at such a moment to offer these idle flippant remarks to him; and without speaking, he began to seal up the packet he had directed to Felicia, while his friend, quite unconscious of his feelings, continued his observations.

He was an acquaintance introduced by Rosalind, with whom his gaiety and thoughtlessness had made him a great favourite. As he drove a phaeton in grand style, played admirably at billiards, and was good-humoured, Evanmore had also found him a very agreeable acquaintance; and having been engaged in one or two affairs of the same nature before, had been selected by him as the fittest person he knew, to accompany him to the field.

"'Tis time to be off, I fancy," said he, watching with the eager gaze of impatient restlessness Evanmore's motions, drawing out his watch, and carefully depositing his pistols in

his pocket as he spoke. “ I never like to be late on such occasions : there’s a great deal in measuring the ground with the eye beforehand.”

Evanmore caught up his hat and gloves, and with a hurried “ I am ready !” walked rapidly down stairs. He opened the hall door with the stern composure of one determined to brave the whisperings of nature, the voice of conscience ; and though when it fell from his grasp, and he heard it close on him, as he believed, for ever, a chill ran through his icy veins, he proudly walked on.

They were the first who reached the place of rendezvous. Lord Edgermond was not yet arrived, and while Evanmore leaned thoughtfully against a tree, till he should appear, his companion commenced the duties of his office. His soul was occupied by the part he was to act in this horrid drama, absorbed in the desire to acquit himself with credit as the second in an affair of honour ; and while he paced the ground, wiped the pistols, and prepared the loading, his thoughts were bent in contriving a paragraph which should announce to the *beau-monde*, that he had again assisted

in arming his fellow-creatures against each other.

“Evanmore!” cried he, hastily stepping up to him, as he saw Lord Edgermond and Colonel Vavasour approach them, “as you are the injured man to all intents and purposes, perhaps Lord Edgermond will offer you the first fire; at all events, I shall most likely be called upon to give the word; and mark me, for there’s a good deal of knack in these sort of things, I will pause a good while between once and twice; but the moment I cry twice, be ready to fire that instant; for I will say thrice, before Lord Edgermond is aware of what I am about; and you—”

“Sir!” cried Evanmore, turning from him with scorn and abhorrence, “do you think I will deign to take an unfair advantage of even —him!”

Mr. Berrindale looked at him with angry amazement. He had even some indistinct suspicion that he ought to resent this infamous ungrateful attack on his honour; but before it acquired any strength, the appearance of Lord Edgermond and his second, gave a new turn to his ideas.

"Is it impossible," said Colonel Vavasour, "that this unhappy affair may not be adjusted without—"

"Impossible, Sir!" interrupted Mr. Berrindale. "My friend's injured honour admits of no other redress."

"From the laws of his country he has already received reparation," pursued Colonel Vavasour, whose distinguished bravery and exalted character rendered him peculiarly calculated to conduct such a meeting.

"Money can be deemed no compensation for Mr. Evanmore's wrongs," said Mr. Berrindale.

"True!" said Evanmore, fiercely starting forward as he spoke. Colonel Vavasour bowed, and in a few moments the ground was measured.

"I am commissioned by Lord Edgermond to offer you the first fire, Sir," said Colonel Vavasour, advancing towards Evanmore.

"Sir," cried Evanmore, while a smile of bitter anguish passed over his lips, "I will accept no favours from Lord Edgermond. Let him take the life he has rendered miserable. And do you, Colonel Vavasour" (he looked

resentfully at his unfeeling second), “ do you give the signal.”

A dead and awful silence followed. Colonel Vavasour pronounced the fatal words, and both fired at the same moment. Evanmore started —his pistol dropped from his palsied hand—he staggered a few paces, and fell on the ground. The surgeon in attendance sprung to his assistance, and with feelings of manly grief and commiseration, Colonel Vavasour took him in his arms, and raised him from the earth.

“ I believe your Lordship had better fly,” said the surgeon, as he fixed his eyes on the death-like countenance of the fainting Evanmore.

Lord Edgermond instantly left the field.

“ I feel all is over !” said Evanmore, as they bore him to the carriage, roused from insensibility by extreme torture. “ Take me home—let me see my child once more ! And you,” glancing his dying eyes at his sympathising supporter, “ you had better leave me.”

“ No, never,” said Colonel Vavasour. “ My obligations to the uncle of your adversary forbade my declining this painful office, or I had spurned it. And I will brave all till I see

you safely conveyed to your own residence." Evanmore feebly pressed his hand, and after a dreadful ride, he was placed on the bed he had left only a few short hours before full of life and health, never to leave it more.

CHAPTER VI.

Though writhing and smarting, yet welcome the rod,
Though in doubt and in darkness, Oh, lean on thy God.

Neale.

COLONEL VAVASOUR had received so many personal obligations from Lord Wilberton, that he could not refuse to attend his nephew and only heir on such an occasion; but he was too well acquainted with the nature of Evanmore's injuries, to feel any thing but detestation for his opponent, and had too sincere a dislike to the unchristian-like practice of duelling, not to feel extremely averse to acting as a second.

In the field of battle, where man is opposed to man, not in enmity, but to defend their dearest rights, and protect all that makes life

valuable, he had fought with a determined intrepidity that had raised him from a lowly origin to affluence and fame. But he revolted from scenes of bloodshed which are produced by personal animosity, to gratify a spirit of deep implacable revenge: nor could he be made to believe, that the honour of any individual can be in the power of another, or depend on the opinion of the world. He considered courage one of the noblest properties of man; but it was courage exerted on a lawful occasion that met his admiration—excited his applause; and had he not felt himself bound by those ties of gratitude to his patron, which a generous bosom longs to repay, he would have positively declined to be a party in such a transaction. Even now, the certainty that he could not prevent the meeting, the hope that he might be able to avert it, contributed to overcome his repugnance to countenance what he deemed cold-blooded, illegal murder. Recoiling from the hateful task, he proceeded to Lord Edgermond's hotel, and learnt from his valet, that his Lordship had desired he would walk into his room, should he arrive before he

was dressed. He followed the man up stairs, and on entering the apartment, saw his Lordship was still calmly reposing. A book lay on the chair by his bed, and his burnt-out taper showed he had been reading till it was consumed. As he approached the bed, he felt curious to learn the nature of a work which could interest a man at such a period ; and, glancing his eyes over the half-open volume, he saw it was “*The Rivals.*” He felt an involuntary sensation of mingled pity and indignation. How was that mind organized which could employ its, perhaps, last hours in perusing a play, inimitable as a work of amusement, but too well calculated to undermine the principles, and hold up to ridicule the most important and awful scenes in which man can be engaged ! How callous that heart which could derive entertainment from such a source, the night before it might consummate the wretchedness it had begun, by robbing the injured Evanmore of life, or be itself cold in the icy grasp of death !

These reflections were interrupted by a yawn from Lord Edgermond ; and after compliment-

ing Colonel Vavasour on his punctuality, observing that he had had a very good night, and requesting he would go into the next room and prepare them some coffee, he sprung out of bed, and dressed himself with his usual care—bestowed even more than ordinary attention upon his teeth, and at breakfast found fault with his man for having neglected to procure them some potted meat.

Colonel Vavasour regarded him with augmented feelings of compassion. His heart had never quailed in the ensanguined plains of the Peninsula, or the bloody field of Waterloo; but he had felt that the pause before he rushed into battle—before he found himself opposed to an enemy—on the brink of eternity, was one of deep and awful interest: nor had he ever felt ashamed of the sensation.

Anxious to arouse his sleeping conscience from the insensibility in which it lay steeped, he asked if he had arranged his affairs; inquired what he would wish to be done, should he fall; and the course he meant to pursue, should Mr. Evanmore, on the contrary, be the victim to their meeting.

Lord Edgermond heard him with apparent

surprise; replied with haughty indifference that he had no arrangements to make—would not trouble him with any commissions; and that it would be time enough to think of his future plans when the issue was decided.

Colonel Vavasour became still more averse from lending his assistance; but again the hope that he might perhaps be instrumental in moderating the rancour of the one, and awakening the sensibility of the other, impelled him to persevere; and not till he saw Evanmore's agonized sense of dishonour, and Lord Edgermond's frozen composure, did he resign the attempt as hopeless. He had seen the guilty author of this scene blooming in loveliness; and while he deplored the misdirected spirit which urged him to such a step, he pitied the wretched husband from whom so rare a gem had been infamously wrested.

He accompanied the dying Evanmore to his forsaken home, and understanding he had no friend or relative in town, determined not to leave him while life throbbed in his languid veins. The wound he had received was of so decided and dangerous a nature, that his medical attendant entertained few hopes he would

survive while on the field, and those hopes, slender as they were, vanished the instant he had examined it.

In paroxysms of agony, succeeded by successive fits, Evanmore passed the day; but towards evening the pains he had endured became less excruciating, and with the first dawning of corporeal ease, he thought of his child. "Oh, let me see her!" he cried, perceiving his attendants feared to bring her to him. "A few fleeting hours are my utmost span—it matters not that they may be shortened."

Colonel Vavasour motioned for her to be brought into the room. Evanmore turned his dying eyes on the door—it opened—and she entered in her nurse's arms. She screamed with delight on seeing him. "But papa is ill!" she cried, in a changing voice, as she marked his pallid hue, and sunken eye, "Poor papa is ill—Rosa will kiss him well again;" and springing from her attendant, she tried to climb upon the bed.

"Oh, never, never," said he, "thy father is lost to thee for ever!" and clasping his arms around her slender form, as Colonel Vavasour

placed her by his side, he burst into a torrent of tears.

“Colonel Vavasour,” said he, at length trying to acquire strength and fortitude, “on my library table there is a packet directed to Miss Leycester, the aunt of this poor babe, which I intrust to your care. I know you will deliver it, for your’s is another heart like her’s. It contains a petition that she will be the guardian and protectress of this dear pledge of—an unfortunate union. Oh, that I could know she would accept the trust—that I could hear her say she will be its protector—that I could place it in her arms!”

“Let me then fetch her!” said Colonel Vavasour.

“Do you think she would come?” said he, with anxious eagerness.

“I have no doubt of it,” he replied. “If only half of what I have heard of Miss Leycester be true, she will willingly visit you in your affliction, and happy will be the fate of your child, even when you shall cease to be its protector.”

“And she—she might have been my wife!” thought Evanmore, as he listened to this

eulogium. “Had I married her, I should now have been a happy husband—a proud father!” a mist arose before his eyes, and sinking on his pillow, he lost all remembrance of his wrongs and sufferings.

Colonel Vavasour had heard something of Evanmore’s former engagement to Felicia; but he was unacquainted with either; and nearly four years had now so completely obliterated the story from his remembrance, that not till he saw Evanmore’s changing hue, was he aware of the error he had committed. Lamenting his inadvertence, he darted out of the house, called a coach, and soon reached Russell-square. He inquired for Miss Leycester, and was told she could not be seen. “But I have business, particular business with her,” said he. “Tell her I am the bearer of a request from Mr. Evanmore.”

The servant again sought Felicia, and in a few moments Colonel Vavasour was ushered into the room where she sat. Her pale countenance and swollen eyes informed him she was no stranger to the situation of Mr. Evanmore; and deeply touched by the disinterestedness of her grief, he felt for her increased sen-

timents of respect. In plain, but energetic language, he stated Evanmore's wishes, and without presuming to urge her compliance, hinted at the satisfaction she would hereafter receive from thinking she had soothed the pillow of his wretched friend.

Felicia started as she heard that it was his ardent desire to see her. She had learnt the dreadful result of his unexpected meeting with Lord Edgermond, with those overwhelming feelings of grief and horror, which, for a time, paralyze the mind ; and, now that the first burst of her emotions was past, contemplated his fate with mingled sentiments of pity and regret. From the interview he solicited, she shrunk with apprehensive delicacy and sicken-ing alarm. But love had no share in her reluctance to visit his more-than-widowed home at this awful period. Compassion, regard, friendship, were the only sentiments she had long felt for Evanmore. Yet while she had by determined resolution, and undeviating virtue, conquered an attachment that would not clearly have conduced to her happiness, she could not contemplate such a meeting without the deepest and keenest feelings. Yet to refuse it

—to seem insensible to his last wishes—regardless of his dying petition, would add anguish to his broken heart; and rising from her chair, after a long and painful struggle, she told Colonel Vavasour she would soon be in readiness to accompany him.

When determined to conquer, she had found it best never to attempt to argue with Lady Wyedale; and her face pale but resolute, her voice low but firm, she announced her intention of visiting Mr. Evanmore immediately, and requested that Mr. Leycester, who was then her companion, would escort her to his house.

There was a something so calm, so solemn, so affecting in her deportment and language, that Lady Wyedale could not summon courage to oppose her departure, or level at her motives one sneer of insult or inhumanity.

Mr. Leycester, who watched the turn of her features, availed himself of her situation to say, “There would be great impropriety in my cousin going alone. I am sure, therefore, my dear aunt, you will excuse me,” and without waiting for a permission, he seemed to think he

had received, ran down stairs to avoid appearing to act in defiance of her secret wishes.

Flinging on a large wrapping cloak, Felicia descended to the room where Colonel Vavasour was sitting, and after introducing Mr. Leycester as her cousin, motioned her desire to set off without delay.

As the coach rumbled through the busy streets, Felicia tried to fortify her mind against her approaching trial. "Perhaps he wished to make her the bearer of some message of forgiveness to Rosalind—perhaps to intrust his child to her care—perhaps to solicit her pardon—No, that was a topic on which she thought and believed he had too much delicacy to touch." The coach stopped, as her distracted fancy alternately reverted to these surmises, and she threw an eager, terrified glance upon the house. Nothing met her fearful gaze—all was dark, lonely, and solemn. No lights beamed from the unclosed windows—no sound cheered the dread silence—the stillness of death hung over it.

Colonel Vavasour sprang out, and his low cautious rap was soon answered by Evanmore's

servant: He had been in Evanmore's service many years, and was consequently acquainted with all that both Felicia and his master had so long wished to consign to oblivion. As he lighted the silent party up stairs, Felicia's eye met his, and overcome by his regret, he said in a stifled voice, "Oh, Miss Felicia, Miss Felicia, this is a sad day! Oh, that my poor master had never, never come to London."

Felicia felt deeply affected, and as he marked her varying complexion, Colonel Vavasour gently pressed her arm, and besought her to endeavour to acquire that composure which was so necessary to support her through such a scene. Felicia appreciated this friendly admonition as it deserved, but every moment, in defiance of her efforts, her agitation increased. The dreary stillness that reigned around, unbroken, save by the melancholy sound of their cautious footsteps as they echoed through the deserted mansion—the dim light that just sufficed to show the solitary grandeur of its spacious apartments, on the polished surface of whose superb mirrors, the rays of the passing lamp shed a few faint, cold, random beams, like the mournful light of a funeral taper

gleaming on the sad ornaments of the last receptacle of man,—all conspired to augment the awfulness of her situation ; and when Colonel Vavasour, at length, slowly opened the door of the chamber of death, she would have fallen, but for his supporting arm. He looked earnestly at her, and breathing a half-expressed prayer for aid, she suffered him to lead her to the couch of the expiring Evanmore.

Death was imprinted on his features—the fire of the eye was extinguished—the brow was rigid and stern—a fatal paleness sat upon his cheek that told the heart would soon beat no more. For a moment he seemed overpowered by her presence, and as his head fell back on his pillow, again a dark cloud passed before his eyes ; but he struggled to recover himself, and in a faint feeble voice expressed his obligations to her for acceding to his desire.

“Colonel Vavasour would tell you,” he continued, in broken accents “that I—”

“I have had no opportunity of explaining your wishes,” said Colonel Vavasour, “for Miss Leycester was accompanied by her relation : he is now alone, and I will join him. When you have communicated your motives

for seeking this interview, I will return to you." He left the room ere Felicia had power to entreat he would remain, and agitated and embarrassed, she sunk on a chair, no longer able to sustain her trembling limbs.

"Miss Leycester!" he said, as he marked her internal anguish. "Sister!" his voice faltered, "I have ventured to hope you will become the guardian of this poor helpless innocent,"—he pointed to the child which lay stretched asleep by his side. "Will you—will you deign, in pity to her orphan state, to accept the trust?"

"I will," said Felicia, in a tremulous but distinct tone.

His lips quivered. "Come then, and receive her. Let me see her in your arms, and I shall die satisfied: the death of her father will be no loss to her if—if you—" She advanced; and bending over the bed, gently took the still-sleeping infant into her arms. A smile of ineffable sweetness lighted up his faded features; he tried to thank her; but the words died on his parched lips, and covering his face with his hands, he seemed to sleep.

The night stole on—a dreadful stillness

reigned around, interrupted only by a low wind which rose and fell in melancholy gusts, or died away in low solemn murmurs. The fire burnt feebly in the grate, and the pale light of a single lamp gleamed fitfully on the sunken countenance of the dying Evanmore.

It was a sad and dismal scene, and as she listened to the sighing of the storm, she thought on that night when she sat in her solitary apartment, while he was the companion of Rosalind to the masquerade. His graceful figure, his sparkling eye, the proud step of youth and conscious elegance—the smile of joy and triumph that then irradiated his striking countenance, rose to her memory with the brightness of reality. She involuntarily threw her eyes on the bed, where lay the mangled form of him she had loved so long and so fondly; then withdrew them with a start of grief and horror. The contrast was too painful, and the tears she had so long suppressed rolled over her ashy face.

From these mournful meditations she was roused by a deep groan. She sprang from her chair, and was hastening for assistance, when he feebly called her back. “ Felicia!” he said,

in a scarcely audible whisper. She approached him. "Let me embrace my child again."

She softly disengaged the little arms that encircled her neck, and was going to place her on the bed.

"No," said he quickly, "don't, don't relin quish her. I like to see her in your arms—sit down near me. I wish—I wish--" his eyes closed—his breathing became short and difficult. Again he opened them, and fixed a dying glance on her agitated features.

"Felicia," he repeated, "come nearer: be not reluctant to approach me. What I have suffered is best known to myself, but all is over—I have now no thought but for my child. At such a moment every other feeling is absorbed by painful anxiety for her, or merges in the awful consideration of death. I see you only as the friend of my happiest days—the soother of the last sad hours of life—the protectress of my babe—the—sister—" His voice altered, large drops bedewed his cold forehead, a film gradually overspread his eyes, his respiration became quicker, and, sinking on her knees, Felicia breathed one silent aspiration for the fluttering spirit.

"Let me see the child!" he said, after a few moments pause.

Felicia bent forwards, and extended it towards him. His hands were stretched out, but he seemed not to be conscious of her vicinity. "Felicia!" he said, as if doubtful where he was. As she endeavoured to place the child within his arms, her hand touched his.

"Ah! is it so?" he raised his hand to his eyes. "All is dark here! Is death so near, then—" he faintly shuddered. "But I can feel her!"—and he pressed his cold lips to her blooming cheek. "Poor babe she sleeps, unconscious that her eyes will never more open on a father's face—that when she wakes, his shall have closed for ever. I cannot see you," he continued, turning to Felicia, "but I know you are an angel of light hovering over my departing soul. Oh! tell me again, you will not permit the faults of this dear innocent's guilty parents to deprive her of your love—that you will cherish her. She has no friend but you. Oh, be her guide—be kinder to her than her earthly parents; for they have abandoned her in her utmost need!"

Felicia's tears fell fast on his hands, and in a voice broken by emotion, she vowed never to part with the treasure he had thus intrusted to her care. "Never will I forsake her," she cried, raising her eyes to Heaven. "My home shall be her home—my God her God!"

He seized her hand, and pressed it within his own—it was the pressure of dying energy. "The letter I have written you," he said, still grasping her hand, "will explain all my wishes, but on one subject——" a slight convulsion passed over his livid face, and the struggles he made, to articulate, were long ineffectual; he then said, "It is my dying command, that she never sees her—mother—"

"Evanmore!" said Felicia, in a low, yet firm voice.

He started at the sound—a dark interval seemed suddenly passed away—it was again the entreating voice of Felicia Leycester—that tone in which she used to usher in those gentle admonitions which he had spurned, which would have led him on to virtue and happiness.

"Oh, let me hear that one word again," he said, while a tear trickled from his dim eyes.

"If we would hope that our Heavenly Father may pardon our sins, we must forgive those who have injured us," said she, bending over him with anxious solicitude as she spoke. "Tell me you forgive my dear, my wretched Rosalind. Oh give me permission to say, that you pardon her, even as you hope to be pardoned by Him before whose awful throne you must soon appear."

"Pray for me, Felicia," said he, after a long and fearful pause.

She threw herself on her knees, and fervently implored that the Divine Spirit would soften his heart, blot out all his transgressions, and receive him into the mansions of the blessed. To these prayers were added others for the deluded Rosalind, that she might see her iniquity, that by penitence she might seek the forgiveness of her offended Maker, and that they might all hereafter meet again in Heaven.

She ceased; and while large tears chased each other down her face, he again pressed her hand, but he did not speak, and Felicia forbore to urge him further. But she seated herself on a chair close by him; and fondly clasping her slumbering little charge to her bosom, still con-

tinued her supplications to Him who is always ready to hear the sighing of the sorrowful.

Evanmore long appeared buried in a deep sleep ; his breathing was hardly perceptible ; and had not a slight convulsive motion now and then agitated his pale hand, as it lay lifelessly over the counterpane, she would have thought he had ceased to be an inhabitant of this world.

The cold gleams of a Winter morning were streaking the dusky zone of Heaven, when he once more unclosed his heavy eyelids.

" Felicia, Heaven has heard your prayers," he murmured. She hung over him. " I have —and—you may—" his voice grew fainter and fainter every instant, " you may say—" he could not proceed.

" You forgive her !" she said, scarcely articulately.

" I do—truly—say, I forgive, and—blessed—" his hand became cold, and clammy ; the damps of death sat on his icy forehead. " Sustain me, Felicia, whilst I pass through this terrible—pray again—" Felicia's lips moved, but her words were inaudible. For two hours she continued by his side incoherently beseeching, that he

might be supported during these last struggles. He then raised himself up as if desirous of trying to see his child once more: the effort was too much, and he fell back—but he sunk gently, and the repentant spirit disentangled itself without a groan from the earth which encumbered it.

CHAPTER VII.

Oh, Love can give no form so dear
As his, who sleeps unconscious here !
Nor after-life can ever bless
This aching heart with happiness.

WHEN those whom we have once loved are blotted from the book of life—when death has claimed them for his own, and the grave is preparing to shut them for ever from our sight, “we find excuses for every weakness, palliations of every fault; we recollect a thousand endearments, which before glided off our minds without impression, a thousand favours unrepaid;” we open our eyes to every excellence, and bury in the lustre of their virtues the remembrance of their errors.

As she gazed on the lifeless form of the murdered Evanmore, Felicia cast a look of re-

tropection on her early years, and mourned, with the bitter tears of anguished regret, the play-fellow of her childhood—the companion of the blissful season of youth. She forgot, that he had deceived her hopes—blighted her visions of happiness. She had given him her whole undivided heart at that sunny season of our existence when the romantic ardour of youth arrays the object of our tenderness with a thousand inexplicable charms. At this sad hour all the unextinguishable love that had lain buried through long years of sorrow, seemed revived. She recollects only, that he was the possessor of her earliest affections—that her faith was pledged to him—that to be united with him in the sacred bonds of marriage had been her prayer—her pride; and leaning over his breathless form, she embalmed it in the warm tears of pity and forgiveness. While one hand supported the sacred deposit he had committed to her care, with the other she gently closed his eyes; and this last sad duty, which friendship can pay to departed nature, finished, she wrapped the child tightly in her cloak, and with lingering steps tore herself for ever from the remains of him whom

she had loved with a fervour she could never, never feel again.

Colonel Vavasour and Mr. Leycester met her at the door, and conducted her with silent respect into the coach which yet waited, by their orders, to convey her back to Russell-square. They were in an adjacent dressing-room, and the groan that burst from Evanmore's lips, when his sufferings terminated in this world, had revealed what she could not tell.

During her dreary drive, Felicia was unable to speak; but when she reached the house, and saw Mr. Leycester preparing to leave her, she caught his hand, and earnestly thanked him for his kind attention. He seemed more affected than she had imagined he could almost have felt, and after kindly wishing him adieu, she placed the little Rosa in her own bed, and throwing herself by her side, soon lost the remembrance of the late awful scene in which she had been engaged.

Words could not paint Lady Wyedale's astonishment and indignation, on learning the promise Felicia made to Mr. Evanmore, and that his child was now under her roof. Such a

finale to the catastrophe had never in her most sombre moments occurred to her imagination ; and for many hours she persisted in declaring that she would turn it out of doors. " She would not be thus duped and imposed upon—she did not care what people said of her," &c. &c. In defiance, however, of these protestations, she did care what people said of her, and, like many others, was more anxious to possess the good opinion of the world, than deserve it. To turn out an unoffending infant at such a moment, and under such circumstances, she was aware would be esteemed an act of cruel inhumanity ; and after many bitter struggles between her wishes and her prudence, she permitted her young niece to remain for the present, but determined to take the first favourable opportunity of dismissing her from the house. Her resentment against Felicia now knew no bounds : here she might indulge her feelings without apprehension of their being the subject of animadversion among her friends. Felicia, she knew, was too honourable to betray the secrets of the prison-house, and depending for security on that very goodness which would have induced a generous bosom to withhold

every reproach, she ventured her abuse without restraint or alarm. Felicia bore all in silence. In addition to native gentleness, she had a great point to carry ; and at length weary of uttering what seemed by some magic power to have lost its sting, or was at least incapable of arousing an angry sentiment, she had recourse to another and more ingenious method of annoyance. She shut herself up in her own apartments—assigned indisposition as her reason—refused to speak, excepting when obliged, and affected to be deeply hurt at the unfeeling treatment she experienced from her only niece.

Felicia was not proof against this mode of warfare, though her better judgment whispered it was only a new scene in the same farce. She could not avoid deplored, that she should have been instrumental in obliging her aunt to submit to what was so unpleasant to her ; and her uneasiness became so evident, that after seeing it some weeks with secret joy, Lady Wyedale began to relent—that is, partly tired of the part she was acting, and partly mollified by her distress. Like many other proficients in the art of tormenting, she usually became tolerably happy herself, when she had made all

around her miserable, and wisely desisted from her operations, when she found they had taken sufficient effect. Felicia was too prudent to bring the source of dissention into her sight ; and though still firmly resolved to drive the child from her roof, when forgetfulness of the mother's desertion, and the father's death, should have ceased to render it an object of commiseration or attention, her Ladyship's mind gradually returned to its best frame, namely, negative amiability.

Anxious to comply with all Evanmore's wishes, Felicia put his affairs into the hands of her cousin, Mr. Leycester, who soon made such arrangements with his creditors, as satisfied them, that they would eventually be honourably paid. The splendid house which the thoughtless Rosalind had so improperly fitted up, was sold, together with its expensive furniture ; and after every demand had been discharged, Mr. Leycester thought there would be a surplus of a few hundred pounds for the little Rosalind Evanmore. For these exertions in favour of his young relative, Felicia felt so obliged, and expressed herself so gratefully, that after bestowing mature thought on the subject, Mr.

Leycester now deemed this the most proper period for striking that grand and decisive blow he had so long meditated. He seized an opportunity, presented by her absence, to solicit a few minutes conversation with Lady Wyedale. With hesitation and embarrassment, that was not altogether feigned, he then declared his attachment to his cousin, acknowledged that he had not a fortune which he considered as equivalent to her expectations, "yet as he was prudent, in a rising and honourable profession, and was, in *family connexions*, *on a par* with herself, he hoped he should not be deemed, on reflection, so presumptuous as he might at first appear. Miss Leycester's habits and his own were so retired and economical, he had no doubt they should, even now, be able to support their station in society with honour and respectability; and as he had the most flattering prospects of success, he hoped his aunt would not refuse her concurrence, should Felicia consent to receive his addresses. He had not yet solicited her hand, because he was not quite assured she would sanction the attachment, and after what she had gone through with one niece, he was resolved not to be in-

strumental in giving her a moment's uneasiness respecting the other. He should deeply deplore her refusal to intercede for him with his cousin, but he should acquiesce without a murmur. He only hoped this candid disclosure would exonerate him from all blame in her eyes—would not rob him of her regard."

Lady Wyedale, when he commenced this harangue, felt dubious whether to be pleased or angry; as, however, he proceeded, the former preponderated. He was her nephew. His hint that his family pretensions were not inferior to Felicia's, had its due weight. Her antipathy to the Beauclercs remained fresh as when they first disdained their connection with the Leyesters; but she did not feel averse to the idea of perpetuating their noble blood in her family. James Leyester, independent of these claims to her favour, had acquired an interest in her heart, deeper than she was herself aware of. His unceasing yet unmarked attentions—his regard for his father's family and mansion—his prudence—his abilities—his person—his address—his rising affluence—all conspired to place him in a favourable point of view. Nor were these his only claims to her

regard : he had gradually become important to her as a legal adviser, and gratuitous conductor of those numerous lawsuits in which her litigious spirit was continually involving her with her dependants.

Though always contending for power and command, and always believing herself the wisest of mankind, Lady Wyedale was beginning to entertain (not without reason) some indistinct remote apprehensions, which she, however, neither wished to strengthen nor approximate, that she had been made the dupe of artifice—overreached by those whose understandings she despised, and whose vulgarity and ignorance *must*, she thought, have kept them in the straight path of honesty. Mr. Leycester had opportunely interfered to save her from the consequences of some of the ill-advised steps she had taken ; and taught her to discover, what she could never have surmised without his assistance, that in defiance of her faith in bad English and bad grammar, she had much more to fear from clown-craft, than either priest-craft or witch-craft. He was, therefore, no longer the James Leycester she would formerly have seen in want and rags, without

remorse ; and after some slight hesitation, intended to render compliance more valuable, she at length gave a half-expressed assent to his formally declaring himself the lover of his cousin.

Mr. Leycester's demonstrations of joy and expressions of gratitude, were perfectly ingenuous. He had played a difficult game, and come off victorious. Mr. Berkely's long delayed declaration of attachment had induced him to think he had either been mistaken in supposing him her lover, or that Rosalind's infamy had impelled him to resign his intention of soliciting her hand ; and Felicia's late alteration of manner towards himself, united with the dejection he noticed when first Mr. Berkely left London, impelled him to believe he should not find it so difficult to secure a place in her heart as he had once imagined. She was hurt, perhaps displeased, at Mr. Berkely's conduct—the only man she had ever really loved was cold in his silent grave, and even should she refuse him, he had gained a great and important advantage, Lady Wyedale would resent her behaviour—a breach might ensue between them—at all events, this con-

tinual opposition to her will would tend to sour Lady Wyedale's temper, and might probably induce her to make a more even distribution of her fortune. He admired Felicia extremely, though he would not have felt an instant's uneasiness if told he should never see her again, and felt persuaded she would make so excellent a wife, that he determined not to suffer the prize to escape him if possible. This *dénouement* was, however, accelerated by the introduction of little Rosalind. She was the only child of his once most powerful competitor; and if Felicia did not marry, and continued to retain her in the house, might grow up a little less dangerous adversary. He therefore resolved to fix her Ladyship's attention on either his cousin or himself, before she could be old enough to step into her mother's situation.

Felicia heard his avowal of affection with the utmost surprise and chagrin. His behaviour had, indeed, been marked by the most respectful and even assiduous attentions; but, accustomed to believe, that it is possible a man may be the friend of a woman without once wishing to be her lover, she had seen nothing more in his manner than their situation fully

authorized. With many expressions of regret, she declined the honour he intended her, and then retired to her apartment more distressed at the idea of having inflicted pain, than Rosalind would formerly have felt elated at the acquisition of a new admirer. Her meditations on this unexpected occurrence were broken in upon by Lady Wyedale, who came to insist upon her acceptance of Mr. Leycester's addresses. She had had a long interview with her nephew, and came prepared to conquer or die. Again Felicia repeated her determination to live unmarried, but it had lost the charm of novelty, and moreover was not accompanied by the same well-timed compliment that secured it so agreeable a reception at Weymouth : it was, therefore, treated with the most profound contempt ; while, irritated at her perseverance, and exasperated at her folly, her Ladyship summed up the measure of her reproaches, by accusing her of cherishing a strong secret attachment towards Mr. Berkely. The hint on which this charge was founded, she had just received from Mr. Leycester ; and every passion in arms at the bare supposition, the remotest possibility of having been deceived, she reserved it as a

coup de grace for the conclusion of their argument, should Felicia prove adverse to her wishes. Felicia replied to this angry impeachment of her delicacy, with the calm composure of conscious innocence, though her cheeks were dyed with blushes.

"If it were so, Madam, I should not be deserving of censure or contempt, unless I improperly betrayed my regard; for it is not disgraceful to be alive to the virtues of an excellent man. I beg, however, your Ladyship will not be distressed on this subject. Mr. Berkely has never solicited my affections, nor have I any reason to suppose he will." Something like a sigh followed this declaration; and turning from Lady Wyedale's scrutinizing gaze, she tried to persuade herself she felt happy that she could thus remove her Ladyship's apprehensions.

Lady Wyedale felt only half satisfied with this dubious reply; one thing was, however, certain, Mr. Berkely had never clandestinely sought to gain her heart, and she had only to discover whether he would be accepted, should he, at some future time, think proper to come forward. But there she was unsuccessful.

Felicia evaded every direct question. She confined herself to repeating that she was sorry she could not return her cousin's affection, and to assuring her aunt she had not the smallest reason to believe Mr. Berkely would ever endeavour to win her hand. Lady Wyedale, appeased by this knowledge, at length quitted the room to relieve Mr. Leycester from the dread she thought he entertained of having a rival in John Berkely. On that head she felt much more uneasiness than he did. He, however, received the information as was befitting his character — thanked his aunt again and again for her kindness, which he assured her he should never, never forget; and with a lover-like hope that his cousin, since her affections were *really disengaged*, might hereafter be induced to regard him with more favourable sentiments, returned to his lodgings, if not with the gaiety of a successful wooer, at least without the usual uneasiness of a rejected one.

CHAPTER VIII.

—I have passed through many a painful year,
While firm, though friendless, I have stood alone
Opposed to all which others shun and fear.
The fool's reproof, the worldly-wise man's sneer
On me have fallen, and yet, perhaps, may fall—;
But vain is hate, where Friendship could not cheer;
Fate hath long changed my heart's best blood to gall,
For love comes never there, nor hope, which comes to all.

Brookes.

THIS, as Felicia at first considered it, unimportant event in her little history, was, as she subsequently found, of more consequence than she had imagined.

Lady Wyedale felt, that she could not have an open quarrel with her neice, because she refused to form a connexion, by no means advantageous, with a man she did not love, to please her; but yet it rankled at her heart, and

Felicia's continual opposition to her will, together with her continual conquests whenever there was a point of any moment in dispute between them, excited her warmest displeasure. She could not bear the superiority of that mind before which she felt her own always sink into insignificance; and the smothering flame being gently cherished by a judicious breeze from Mr. Leycester, who saw Felicia's ascendancy, on one point especially, with dismay—she at length determined to shake off the galling yoke; assert her independence, and evince her own power in her own house.

"Pray, Miss Leycester," said she, one evening, when ready primed for a quarrel by a run of ill-luck at cards, as they sat over the fire after their company had retired, "pray, Miss Leycester, what may be your intentions respecting your darling *protégée*?" Felicia was silent. Her intentions were scarcely known to herself.

"Do you suppose I shall permit my house to be made a nursery for all the beggars' brats in the country? If you do, you are mightily mistaken. I will not encourage vice and disobedience, I assure you, Ma'am. I have coun-

tenanced you in this whim too long either for your respectability or my own, and I now require you, to dismiss the noisy little wretch without further opposition."

"If your Ladyship insists upon the removal of my little niece, it is not for me to contend; but I will candidly own I was in hopes, that the consideration of her more than orphan state would induce you to shelter her unprotected infancy; and I still trust, my dear aunt, you—"

"I undertake the care of another child!" said Lady Wyedale, "Yes, truly, I have had fine encouragement in the behaviour of her mother"—her cheek glowed with rage: she had now entered on a subject fertile in dissension, and her eloquence, like the rushing waters of an impetuous cataract, gathered strength as it proceeded. "No, Ma'am, I don't affect to be a *saint*; but it shall never be said my house is the asylum of sin and shame. No, her profligate mother shall not continue her course of infamy without a pang, secure that I am the protectress of the child she has deserted. After all my kindness to her, to be so treated—I that loved her better than myself, and from attachment palliated those errors for which all

the rest of the world were ready to condemn her! No, I have suffered enough from the mother! I will so far profit by my misfortune as never to subject myself to the possibility of similar behaviour from the daughter; besides, I think it wicked, absolutely wicked, to afford assistance to the child of such an abandoned, dissolute wretch."

"But the babe," said Felicia, taking advantage of a pause, made to recover breath to proceed, "the babe is guiltless of its mother's crime; and if your Ladyship refuses to succour its infancy, who shall teach it to shun the errors that have led to its mother's ruin?"

"What is that to me?" cried she, every feature swelling with rage. "Am I to be made answerable for the support and education of the children of a niece who has abused my confidence, destroyed my peace, and brought disgrace on my name and family? No, let the Evanmores take the precious charge."

"Mr. Evanmore had no *near* relations," said Felicia. Compassion she knew often survives the wreck of better feelings; and anxious, if possible, to awaken a spark in the flinty bosom of Lady Wyedale, she expressed her convic-

tion, that his relatives would not extend the hand of kindness to his little orphan.

"Then it must go to a workhouse," said Lady Wyedale. "I know no place more proper for it. The sins of the fathers are to be visited upon the children, we are told in the Bible, and that is authority which I presume you will not attempt to dispute."

"The sins of the fathers are necessarily visited upon the children," said Felicia, "because they must, according to the ordinary course of worldly events, be involved in the dishonour of their parents; but I cannot interpret the awful denunciation of an offended Creator into a command that we, his guilty creatures, should withhold, from the helpless and innocent, that forgiveness and pity which have so often been declared to be the foundation of all virtue."

"Very well, Ma'am, then put in practice what you esteem virtue immediately, and find some other abode for your plaything to-morrow. I will not incur the responsibility of providing for the child of Lord Edgermond's kept mistress, I assure you. And remember, if ever you

have the audacity to mention this subject to me again, we part for ever."

" As to that, Madam," replied Felicia, whose temper had scarcely been able to brook this cruel allusion to Rosalind, " if you compel me to remove the infant from under your roof, you must be aware I can no longer find a shelter with you. I solemnly assured Mr. Evanmore in his last moments, that I would never abandon his child; and, however I may lament that I cannot reconcile my duty to you with my promise to him, I must abide by it."

Lady Wyedale stood silent from passion and amazement; but it was the silence which precedes the fierce howling of the tempest after its rage has for a moment been suspended.

Furious herself at opposition, she was unable to comprehend that it was possible any one could really be firm and decided, without expressing equal wrath; and deceived by the calmness of Felicia's manner, this intelligence was not more provoking than astonishing.

" As you please, Miss Leycester," she at length cried, collecting with difficulty her breath, that she might pour forth the reproaches

and taunts that crowded to her mind. “ As you please ; I was not unprepared for this stroke. I always thought it probable, your mean, shameful attachment to Mr. Evanmore would impel you to relinquish me, rather than his offspring.”

“ I lament,” said Felicia, while a deep blush of shame suffused her face, “ that your Ladyship should ascribe so improper a motive to my conduct—the purity of my attachment to my little Rosalind—”

“ Oh, no doubt,” interrupted Lady Wyedale, “ it would be the height of illiberality to suspect the purity of such a saint ; but I am not to be so deceived—the world—the Berkelys—shall not be so deceived—I will make a point of unmasking you. I will tell them, that to cherish the child of your sister’s husband, you have left in her age and sickness your father’s sister.” Tears now burst from her eyes, and she sobbed with hysterical violence, till Felicia, roused to resentment by this threat, and aware that her tears flowed from passion, not disappointed affection, said, with assumed calmness.

“ The opinion of the world is with me a secondary consideration ; however I may desire to escape its obloquy, I know that the appro-

bation of my own conscience is of far greater importance to my peace ; and deeply as I must deplore that your Ladyship's ill-grounded suspicions should deprive me of the esteem of a family for whom I entertain so sincere a regard and respect, I cannot permit any selfish feelings to interfere with my sense of duty, with the sacred obligations of an oath."

This unfortunate compliment to the Berkelys completed Lady Wyedale's exasperation. "Really ! Why, you ought to be quite obliged to me for thus giving you the opportunity of exercising your goodness. You are now persecuted for righteousness-sake ; I see your form erect with noble daring. In your own estimation you stand a martyr. Pride is not one of the sins you pious people include in your décalogue, is it ?"

"Patience, I think your Ladyship must at least believe we esteem a virtue," rose to Felicia's lips ; but she checked it, and bore in silence this unmerited reproach.

"You are then decided !" said she, after a pause, during which she vainly hoped Felicia might afford her some pretence for her violence. "You are determined to leave me !"

"If your Ladyship, in pity to me and the poor babe, will allow it——"

"Go, then!" she cried, her little person active beyond its usual activity, and rage lending additional strength to her foot, as she stamped the ground, "Go—go instantly—"

"It is very late," said Felicia, in a voice of mingled alarm and supplication. "Your Ladyship will, I hope, permit me to remain until morning."

"Remain till morning! No. If you are determined to sacrifice me to Evanmore's brat, you shall go instantly—this moment. I will not shelter such an ungrateful wretch an instant longer."

Felicia approached the bell. "Your Ladyship will then, I trust, allow your servants to call me a coach, and conduct me in safety to some respectable asylum."

"At their peril, let any of them execute your commissions. I will be the only mistress over my own domestics—the head in my own house."

Felicia felt an involuntary sensation of alarm at this unexpected act of violent oppression; and she walked with trembling steps to the

window. The night was dark and starless, the lamps burnt feebly in the solitary square, and with a face of anxiety and terror, she exclaimed, “It is impossible I can go alone to call a coach, if any yet remain, at such an hour, an unprotected woman—”

“Oh, don’t be apprehensive,” said Lady Wyedale, whose spirit always rose in proportion as she perceived Felicia’s begin to decline, “don’t be afraid of trusting yourself alone; your beauty is not of so transcendent a quality, that you need be in the least apprehensive of the consequences of your temerity—nobody will run away with you.”

“Probably not,” said Felicia, who now began to entertain a hope, that by an occasional rejoinder, she might detain her Ladyship in conversation, till it would be impossible for her, however inclined, so far to forget the claims of decency and humanity, as to drive out her niece, a wanderer into the streets of the metropolis; “but though no disastrous consequences might arise from such a step, its remembrance would attach itself unpleasantly both to your Ladyship and myself.”

“I despise your innuendo,” cried Lady

Wyedale ; “ your artfulness may, indeed, influence some of your beloved saints to think of me with contempt and abhorrence ; but, thank God, I am above their malevolence, and spurn at their censures. I shall never be influenced by the opinion of fools and bigots.”

In spite of this declaration, Felicia found she had touched the right string, and that it spoke. Lady Wyedale was perpetually boasting of her freedom from the enslaving shackles of those she denominated enthusiasts, a name indiscriminately applied to all who appeared influenced by better principles than herself ; but it had long been evident to Felicia’s penetration that her freedom existed more in theory than practice, and that when in the society she affected to despise, she rather tried to think than feel herself unconstrained or superior.

“ I grieve that your Ladyship can think so meanly of me,” said Felicia, “ as to imagine I shall communicate even to my dearest friend any thing tending to reflect upon the character of my only relative—that relative, my father’s sister.”—Felicia’s voice trembled : she had begun in the hope of awaking the feelings of her auditor ; there she was unsuccessful ; but the

chord vibrated her own. Lady Wyedale—the capricious, unfeeling Lady Wyedale, faded before her eyes, and she beheld her only as the aunt—the sister of a father now mouldering in the grave. The remembrance of present harshness merged in the recollection of former kindness. She had received her when she had no other asylum to shield her—protected the infancy of a sister dear, though guilty ; and that she had failed to execute with fidelity and ability so important a trust might, she thought ought, partly to be ascribed to the errors which attended her own education. She lamented that she was parting on terms of animosity with so near a relative, one too, whose situation even entitled her to be regarded with duty ; and her eyes swimming in tears, she approached Lady Wyedale, who stood with anger in her face, defiance in her form, once more to sue for pity for the babe ; or if it were vain to hope that she would guard its youth, entreat her forgiveness of the step she felt she was compelled to take.

Lady Wyedale saw the workings of her soul, the struggles between contending feelings and interests ; but she now knew Felicia's character

too well to doubt that she would resign what she deemed a superior to a lesser duty. Implacable in her resentments, and narrow in her policy, she resolved her house should be no refuge to the destitute child of the disobedient, guilty Rosalind ; and, hopeless of Felicia's compliance with her wishes, viewed her agitated countenance without a sentiment of pity and remorse.

" You know the terms of our intercourse, Miss Leycester," said she, when Felicia, after this futile effort to arouse her compassion had failed, expressed a hope that she might occasionally be permitted to visit in Russel-square.

" Conquer your misplaced, improper attachment for the child of Mr. Evanmore, and remain with me, or we separate for ever."

Felicia sunk into a chair. But Lady Wyedale's was not a heart that ever felt the soft relentings of pity. She moved towards the bell ; Felicia started ; she feared it was to drive her from her presence : the hoarse tones of the watch proclaiming the hour of twelve, and a rainy night seemed to check the half-formed intention. She turned to the breathless Felicia,

"Miss Leycester, you may remain till morning; I then expect you to leave my house, accompanied by the little wretch for whom you cherish so guilty a passion. We have met for the last time."

"Oh, say not so!" cried Felicia. "Let me hope, that should sickness, or declining years require the zeal and care of unbought attachment, you will again receive me to your bosom."

The dignified calmness Lady Wyedale had suddenly thought it proper to assume was overpowered by this injudicious allusion, as she imagined, to her declining health and departing youth.

"I thank you, Ma'am," she replied, resentment and spite illuminating every feature, "but I hope I am not so near death as you seem to flatter yourself; and when I am, thank God, I can always secure as kind attentions as those you are disposed to press upon me; as disinterested ones, I am sure I can. You would only attend me in the hope of securing, what you perhaps deem your right; and every hireling in my house can but be influenced by

similar motives." She seized a candle as she spoke, and with a smile of ineffable rage and disdain, rushed out of the room.

"My father's sister!" said Felicia, in a low voice, as she followed her retreating figure. "May she never, never want those tender attentions I would joy to give her!"

CHAPTER IX.

Can earthly blessings ever beam
On my lone heart a brighter gleam?
Ah, no! for all my earthly trust
Is buried in the silent dust.

IT was at the still solemn hour of twilight that Felicia rose from her sleepless couch, and silently directed her steps to the apartment of Jenny. She was fast locked in slumber.

“Jenny,” she said, as she bent over her, “I am going to leave this house for ever.” Jenny started as from a trance. “I do not urge you to go with me, for mine will be in future a life of obscurity, and Lady Wyedale, I doubt not—”

“Oh, I will never, never stay, not a minute

after you are gone," said she, jumping out of bed. "I will turn my hand to aught, and nothing shall come amiss to me, only let me go with you."

Felicia's eyes swam in tears. "I hope I shall still be able to reward your fidelity," she said. Jenny assured her, and with truth, she wanted nothing but to be near her; and, after briefly hinting, that she had had a misunderstanding with Lady Wyedale, Felicia desired her to pack up her clothes, and call a coach with as much expedition as possible. She then returned to her own apartment, awoke her little companion, who constantly shared her bed, and after dressing her, was soon in readiness to leave the mansion of her aunt.

There had been in Lady Wyedale's manner, even more than her words, a cool determined implacability, that assured her any further attempt to shake her resolution, or soften her resentment, would be vain; and when she reflected on the cruel insults she had received, Felicia felt she could never view her again with even those negative sentiments of regard she had once entertained for her. Under these cir-

cumstances their separation was probably desirable. She had submitted to unparalleled treatment in the hope that she might have been of service to Rosalind, and her deserted child ; that hope was now dissipated ; each succeeding day seemed to strengthen Lady Wyedale's abhorrence to the names of Rosalind and Evanmore. Her own wants were so few, it mattered little whether she were the favoured daughter of affluence, riding in a gilded chariot, or a humble pedestrian in the vale of middle life ; and, though she still regretted that all intercourse between herself and so near a relative was destroyed, she soon learnt to regard this change in her situation with the calmness of Christian fortitude.

Jenny was by no means so much of a philosopher. She had, without hesitation, determined on sharing her mistress's fortune ; but she deeply regretted this alteration in her destiny. Her pride and her affection equally revolted from seeing her dear young lady driven from the house she had so long believed would be her own. She took a sorrowful leave of her associates ; and casting back a lingering

look into the servants'-hall, as she passed its wide portal for the last time, she could not help heaving, like the children of Israel, a sigh after the flesh pots of Egypt.

"Where am I to drive?" was the first question that conveyed a new chill to Felicia's heart. She was then a wanderer, without a home, going she knew not whither. But quickly recovering her presence of mind, she directed the coachman to proceed towards Chiswick, and stop at the first neat-looking house that announced lodgings to let. The man nodded his head in assent, closed the door with an exclamation that it was "a desperate cold raw morning," and mounting his box, drove off.

Jenny's heart sunk within her. She had never before seen her mistress approached by an inferior without the most profound respect; and she felt the familiar nod, and the vulgar exclamation of the coachman, as so many attacks levelled at the consequence of each. Felicia noticed not these proofs of her degraded state. The heart encompassed by real grief is impenetrable to petty evils. She was, in fancy, arranging her little establishment, calculating her expenses, and reflecting with a feeling of

self-approbation, that threw over her darkened prospects a soft, calm, mournful light, like moon-beams gleaming on a still sad lake, that she was indeed fulfilling her last promise to Evanmore. The coach stopping at the door of a neat cottage, interrupted this reverie.

" You may go on, the like o' that will never do for my mistress, mun !" instantly caught her ear, in the well-known tones of Jenny's voice in a half passion. She looked out of the window, and saw a house, small, indeed, but wearing an appearance of comfort that immediately arrested her attention. Its green-painted windows, shining in the morning sun, and its confined garden in front, gay with the vivid colouring of flowers of unnumbered hues, struck her as indicative of cleanliness and industry in its possessor.

" Stop !" she cried, as the man, with a half-uttered growl at the familiarity of Jenny's reproof was preparing to drive on. He willingly obeyed, and opening the door, she sprang out.

The business was soon settled ; the proprietor was a young widow, who had just lost her husband, and was desirous of eking out a limited income, by letting a part of her house.

As she mentioned the loss she had sustained, tears gushed from her eyes, and without a moment's further demur, Felicia closed their agreement. She too had lost all she loved on earth; and regarding her future acquaintance as a partner in adversity, whose burthen it was her duty to lighten, if in her power, she returned to the coach, which waited at the little garden gate, took Rosa in her arms, and announced that she should make no further inquiry.

Jenny felt exceedingly crest-fallen before the coachman; but though Felicia's words and tones were always mild, there was a something in her manner which forbade the smallest remonstrance, or appeal from her decisions; and she followed her without a comment, into a little parlour, so neatly fitted up, that she felt a portion of her chagrin abate. Their luggage was soon removed into the house, and, with a feeling of almost pleasure, Felicia took full possession of her new habitation.

These emotions were shared by little Rosa. She bounded round the garden, smelt at the flowers, and imitated the trilling of the birds. Her residence at Russel-square had been ex-

ceedingly irksome to her ; for the dread lest any of the expressions of either infantile joy or sorrow might accelerate her removal, had made Felicia confine her so entirely to her own apartment, that she was beginning to feel excessively weary of her situation. She had all the life, spirit, energy, and activity of her mother, softened by the gentleness that so eminently distinguished her ill-fated father ; and though at Felicia's bidding, she would have remained motionless for an hour, she often lamented the loss of the "little nice garden behind papa's own house, where she used to run races with him round the grass-plat, all along the gravel-walk, and often beat." Of her father she often spoke, and her surprise that he never, never came to see her, was mingled with inquiries when he would be well. Rosalind was much seldomer the topic of her discourse. She sometimes mentioned her as "pretty mama ;" but she had seen so little of pretty mama since she became capable of distinguishing, that remembrance of her seemed each day to become fainter.

Jenny was reconciled more slowly to the widow's humble mansion. She had become so

much accustomed to a servants'-hall, a host of fellow-servants, and the luxuries of a second table, that she felt a sensation like suffocation when she ate her plain meal in the little kitchen,—a feeling of desolateness when she sat down to work by herself in Felicia's apartment. Like many of her fellow-creatures, elevated above their former condition in life, she had forgotten the time when she inhabited the cottage of her father, and shared his slender weekly pittance with seven brothers and sisters. She became dejected, though never disrespectful; and Felicia, penetrating into this change in her disposition, immediately sought to remove it by gentle remonstrances and mild admonitions.

She reminded her of her former situation and present views; observed that she was now in a situation that would gradually prepare her for the still greater privations she must undergo as the wife of a young man, whose fortune was yet to make, and whose station in society would never allow her to partake of those luxuries and pleasures she had enjoyed under the roof of Lady Wyedale. "As his wife," she pursued, "you must necessarily pass many

hours entirely alone : you must live yet plainer, and work much harder ; for years must elapse before you would, I should hope, think of taking a servant even if successful in the world. But if you now fortify your mind to bear these little hardships, they will not appear such. Rich in the love of a good man, and the consciousness of doing your duty, the pleasures of evening will amply atone for the labours of the day. He will return with joy to his neat fire-side, his cheerful wife ; and you, in anticipating his appearance and providing for his comfort, will never spend one irksome hour during his absence. But this domestic happiness will never be yours if you marry, determined not to be contented without the luxuries you enjoyed as a single woman. No ; if you cannot submit to these trifling diminutions of personal comfort, you must not marry. Relinquish your engagement at once, and endeavour to get a situation again in some affluent family."

Jenny listened to this remonstrance with the most profound attention, and a little secret displeasure. She felt ashamed of being thought selfish, unable to make the least sacrifice ; and was by no means inclined to resign her lover. Still

she knew it was well-intended, and with a low silent courtesy, she withdrew to analyze those feelings of depression which her young mistress had, she thought, a little harshly ascribed to so unpleasant a source. But though hasty in her temper, Jenny possessed a strong, shrewd, ingenuous mind, and the result of an hour's reflection convinced her she could in no other way account for her want of spirits, than by tracing it to a diminution in her personal enjoyments. She was living with the same mistress, had little more to do ; nothing had gone wrong between her and Mr. Samuel Burton. She was in good health, and consequently, after all, it was as Felicia hinted ; she had indulged a little splenetic melancholy because she had been deprived of a few gratifications which exclusively belong to persons of wealth and their dependents. She blushed as she slowly admitted the truth of the mortifying charge, which Felicia had indirectly preferred against her, and determined to show she could submit to be married, by the cheerfulness of her future behaviour.

The change was observed by Felicia with a pleasure which more than repaid her for the

uneasiness she had felt in witnessing her previous dejection. In defiance of this little blot, Jenny had lately become a greater favourite with her; for she was so kind, so attentive to her young *protégée*, she deemed her an invaluable domestic on that account only; and the struggle she had made before she could even bring herself to endure the child, rendered her present attachment more meritorious.

When first Felicia introduced the child into her aunt's establishment, Jenny contemplated her with almost detestation. She was the daughter of Rosalind. Her mother had robbed Felicia of her father, and her father's false-heartedness had half killed her dear mistress. These crimes she was, like **Lady Wyedale**, of opinion ought to be visited upon their offspring, or at least, if she did not reason on the justice of such a sentence, she acted as if she did. In her dark laughing eye, she saw the mother's flirting spirit; in her sweet smile and soft voice the father's hollow coaxing ways. Felicia saw it would be vain to reason with her; she had, therefore, recourse to another method to allay the animosity which she evidently thought she

ought to feel against the child of persons who had used her mistress so ill. She employed her to teach her her letters ; frequently quitted the room with the remark of, “ Jenny, I leave my dearest Rosa to your care : I am sure you will not abuse the trust ;” or “ Jenny, pray take the child into the parks, I feel she is as safe with you as with me.”

Besides the ambition to merit commendation and confidence, which is generally found in a well-disposed heart, there is in undeserved approbation, something from which it instinctively turns with secret confusion. Jenny was proud of this disguised praise, yet not quite sure it of right belonged to her. After hesitating whether she should avow her dislike, or try to overcome it, she quieted her scruples by determining faithfully to discharge the obligations thus intrusted to her, however disagreeable ; and before a month had elapsed, began to smile at her little charge’s comical ways—be pleased with her growing attachment to herself, and astonished at her being so little like her mother. The instant her mind suggested this latter idea, Rosa mounted so many steps in her regard, that she no longer felt the smallest remnant of

former antipathy ; and, after a few ineffectual efforts not to love Rosalind's child, she became convinced she could not help it, and that "the poor little thing, after all, wasn't to blame for what her father and mother did before she was born."

CHAPTER X.

Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny.

Shakspeare.

And thou, my earliest love—my latest care,
Where hidest thou thy black despair ;
In what lone chamber dost thou seek
To screen thy guilty care-worn cheek ?
Oh, come ! and let me with thee share
The anguish'd hour—the broken prayer.
Though lost to all thy former charms,
I still could clasp thee in my arms,
If smother'd sigh, or starting tear
Bespoke thee penitent, sincere.

FROM his visit to his brother, Mr. Berkely returned home more depressed in spirits than he had even before felt. Lady Wyedale's continued and pointed dislike to his attentions, together with Felicia's excessive dejection, ope-

rated to persuade him if she ever should accept his addresses, it could only be at some very distant period. At such a moment, too, he thought it would be equally indelicate and dangerous to his cause, to solicit her hand ; and influenced by these considerations, not as Felicia imagined by a reluctance to unite himself to the sister of a woman who had forfeited her honour, he returned to the Grove without making the avowal which had so often risen to his lips. Still he thought that Felicia did not regard him with total indifference, and he was resolved to make another effort to see her, when in a letter to Miss Berkely, she mentioned having adopted her little niece. He felt staggered—had Mr. Evans more no other relation to whose care the child might have been consigned—was it not going farther than was necessary in the path of sisterly duty ? These and many other conjectures equally unpleasant, detained him till a few weeks after she left Lady Wyedale. Time had then effaced the force of these surmises, while his attachment gained strength ; and, determined to know his fate, he reached Russel-square. He rapped, with a beating heart, at the door, and, all the lover in his voice, stammered out an inquiry for Miss Leycester.

"Miss Leycester! she don't live here," was the answer. Berkely felt an instant's surprise; but supposing he had mistaken the house, was turning away, when the livery again arrested his steps.

"Lady Wyedale lives here?"

"Yes, Sir."

"And Miss Leycester!"

"No, Sir, she has left my Lady some time."

Mr. Berkely started. "Where is she?" he asked, in a voice of blended astonishment and concern.

"I don't know, Sir," and turning on his heel, he prepared to shut the door.

"I must see Lady Wyedale!" said Mr. Berkely, hastily preventing his intention. "I must see her directly." The man said something about her Ladyship's not being at home; but Berkely heeded it not, he pushed by him, and bounded up the stairs. The drawing-room door was open, and, forgetful of all ceremony in his anxiety to learn Felicia's residence, and the reason of this strange alteration in her situation, he introduced himself.

Lady Wyedale received him with a look of undisguised displeasure; but regardless of her

indignation, after a hurried apology for his intrusion, he requested to be informed where he could meet with Miss Leycester.

The floodgates of Lady Wyedale's resentment and grief were now opened. She had fancied he came to remonstrate with her on her behaviour to Felicia, and her little niece ; and, delighted to find he was in ignorance of the whole business, she poured out the long catalogue of Felicia's sins, and her own injuries.

Mr. Berkely listened with the cold chill of almost despair. He made every allowance for her Ladyship's manner of relating the story ; but, divested of all embellishment, the facts themselves were terrific to his feelings as a lover. The child of Evanmore was her idolatry —lived with her—slept with her. She had broken through the ties of duty and gratitude, relinquished the fortune and countenance of her aunt, and abandoned her in the decline of life, with decaying health, that she might devote herself to the child of her former lover. That this child was also the deserted infant of her *only sister*, scarcely once occurred to soothe the tumult of his feelings. Indeed, it was a circumstance so carefully kept out of Lady

Wyedale's narrative, that it was not very strange he overlooked it. “*The child of Mr. Evanmore! Mr. Evanmore's child!*” were sentences so perpetually obtruded on his ear during Lady Wyedale's recital, that in the anxiety and surprise of the moment, he forgot this material justification of the step she had taken. In a paroxysm of wounded affection and disappointment, he threw on the table the letters he had brought from his sister; and with a hardly intelligible request that they might be forwarded to Miss Leycester's lodgings, left the house determined to think of her no more. “Yes, however great the sacrifice—however painful the struggle—he would tear her from his heart—he loved her; but he would never unite his fate to a woman who had, notwithstanding her outward prudence, evidently cherished a secret attachment to the husband of her sister.”

In increased attention to every former occupation, he tried to banish her remembrance. Yet, still her mild features and sweet voice were ever present to his eye and ear; and he waited with a degree of impatience, which he could not repress, for her replies to the letters

he had left with Lady Wyedale. They might contain some explanation of her motives—some apology for this departure from her accustomed propriety of behaviour. No such apology however arrived; Felicia continued silent; and interpreting her seeming neglect of his family into a confirmation of his apprehensions, he began with the sincerest emotions of regret to consider her as indeed lost to him.

While such were the sentiments and feelings of Mr. Berkely, Felicia, still the inhabitant of her humble lodgings, reflected on the length of time which had elapsed since she wrote to his family, with little less uneasiness. The letters he had intrusted to the care of Lady Wyedale never reached her hands; for, though she had written a few respectful lines stating where she was residing, when she sent for her books, and some other trifles she had been unable to remove at the time she left Russel-square, her Ladyship affected not to know exactly where she was. She had no desire to promote any intercourse between them, and, as she had thrown the note into the fire the moment after having perused it, tried to persuade herself she was in ignorance of her direction. Some-

thing swam in her head about lodgings at Chiswick, with a widow; but she did not choose to task her memory to particularize this vague, indistinct remembrance. At length, when some months had rolled away, Felicia resigned all hope of receiving any reply to the letter she had addressed to Miss Berkely, stating, that she had become the protectress of her infant niece : while a remote suspicion, that the Berkelys disapproved of her conduct, sometimes arose like a dark cloud over the dawning happiness she began to feel in the society of her sportive companion.

In defiance of her wish to disguise the truth on this subject from her mind, the idea that she had awakened attachment in Mr. Berkely's bosom was once an agreeable one ; though she implicitly believed she should have rejected him, had he offered her his hand, and tried to persuade herself, that she deplored the uneasiness his unrequited passion must cost him. But Felicia was a mere woman ; and there is in the consciousness of being beloved by those who possess our esteem and respect, a something so gratifying to the best feelings of the heart, a pleasure so pure, so disinterested, so elevating,

that it may be questioned whether it is not entirely free from that base mixture of motives and passions, by which even the best among us are too often actuated.

Now, when adverse circumstances had destroyed every probability of his addressing her, she became more sensible of the nature of her feelings towards him, and not quite so sure she should have repulsed his affection. But she always tried to conquer such reflections, and only permitted herself to lament the loss of their friendship, and that Mr. Berkely should think she had probably been precipitate, imprudent. She could, however, only deplore that she had been placed in such a situation; she must either resign the protection of her aunt, or break her solemn promise to a dying father—that father the husband of her sister, her—oh, what had he not been to her! Nor were these the only regrets that darkened her lonely hours, the fears she ever secretly entertained, that Lord Edgermond would never make a wife of her, now covered with shame and dishonour, whom he had rejected in her days of innocence, had been almost confirmed, ere she left Lady Wyedale's; and she had subsequently learnt, in

hints, that the shaft was envenomed by the desertion of her destroyer. Felicia felt that she ought to rejoice at this termination of their connexion, since she could no longer hope for even that inadequate reparation, which was all he could make after such an injury. Yet it gave her another pang: Rosalind deserted—Rosalind abandoned—cast off as a vile incumbrance by him who had thus robbed her of that which makes life valuable. Oh, it was agony to think of Rosalind as an out-cast, from even him for whom she had sacrificed her blooming charms—her youthful innocence. To these painful images succeeded a picture still more fraught with anguish—it was, Rosalind languishing in obscurity, perhaps even wanting the common necessaries of life. “No, it could not be—even Lord Edgermond could not consign to such abject misery the wretched victim of his arts and her own vanity. He had doubtless settled a large income upon her; he might not have chosen to wed infamy to even his own depraved bosom, or relinquish his engagement to the amiable Lady Charlotte, but he had doubtless secured her all those luxuries to which she had been accustomed

from her birth." But while she tried to allay her alarms on this subject, the image of Rosalind in more than mental misery haunted her; and after many weeks of intense meditation and conflictive feelings, she determined to write a note to Lord Edgermond to solicit her address.

To address him, to ask a favour, though such a favour, of him, was, indeed, an exercise of fortitude. But the desire of learning some intelligence respecting her, the dread of her being in distress, surmounted every other consideration; - and with a recoiling, sickening heart, she wrote a few lines entreating to know the fate of her sister. She knew that those who have a petition to prefer, must not give way to their feelings, however justly wounded, and she uttered no complaint, breathed no censure; she simply inquired where she was now residing, or had resided when he heard of her last. "To this letter he will not refuse an answer," she thought: nor was she mistaken. A few days brought an answer. It was couched in those terms of involuntary respect, which even a libertine can seldom avoid applying to a woman he knows to be virtuous; but it con-

tained no information to atone for the self-control she had exercised in addressing him. The last time he saw her sister, she was living in Venice—the fictitious name by which she was distinguished, together with the place of abode, were subjoined. He did not state the precise period when they parted; but from the length of time he had been in England, she could not help fearing Rosalind might have left Venice. She, however, wrote without delay, entreated she would remove her anxiety by stating her real situation and resources; communicated to her Evanmore's dying forgiveness, and informed her, she was become the protector of her child. She knew Rosalind's temper too well to hazard the smallest reproach, the most distant allusion to her past crime, beyond that necessarily conveyed in Mr. Evanmore's message; and day after day she anxiously awaited a reply. None, however, arrived; and then, assured she had removed, she wrote to the persons at whose house she had resided, requesting, if she had left them, to know where she went.

To this letter she obtained an answer; but it was only to destroy every previous hope of

ever learning where she hid her guilty head. She had quitted Venice many months; and they had not the smallest clue to her retreat. Felicia folded up this letter in silent sorrow: all hope of seeing again the sister she had loved—still loved so tenderly, fled—they had parted to meet no more, and all that now remained to her was the sacred legacy of her injured Evanmore. To the bitterness of her feelings under these successive blows, succeeded the hushed calmness of disappointment. She had gradually lost every friend, every tie that bound her to life, but one; and when, in the silence of evening (while the child slept tranquilly in its little cradle at her feet) she contemplated its vicissitudes—its evanescent pleasures—its perishable passions—its petty pomps—its fading glories—the world vanished from before her; and her spirit looking back upon its cares—its joys—its allurements—its struggles—with astonishment and contempt, soared to those brighter regions whose dazzling lustre is impenetrable, but to the eye of faith. But though such brilliant visions may sometimes illumine the gloom of a dark horizon, sometimes elevate the pious mind above the transi-

tory afflictions of this chequered scene of our existence, they partake of the fleeting nature of all sublunary joys; and while a religious spirit will never lose the well-grounded hope, which assures of future happiness, it cannot, nor should it, so far shake off mortality as to be entirely abstracted from its concerns. That she had not yet learnt to be indifferent to this world she was taught in the indisposition of little Rosalind, who caught the small-pox, and it proved of so virulent a kind that great fears were entertained for her safety. Felicia had loved her fondly before; but her illness intertwined ten thousand new chains about her heart. Again she felt that she would still suffer a pang, great as almost any former one, should this last link be torn from her; and it was her daily care, her nightly prayer, that she might be spared to her. A fortnight had she watched by the side of the now insensible child, and the dreaded crisis was fast approaching, when one evening the little sufferer suddenly fainted.

“Oh, she is dying!” cried Jenny, wringing her hands. “She is dying! Pretty, pretty creature, she is dying!”

Felicia scarcely breathed while she pressed

her trembling hand on the child's little bosom to feel if life still throbbed in its heart. "She is not dead!" she cried, tears gushing from her eyes. She raised her eyes to Heaven. "Oh, if it be Thy will," she murmured, "grant her to me!" The child opened its eyes—something like dawning intelligence beamed in their sunken glance, and the delighted Felicia clasped it with maternal fondness to her anxious breast.

Though she felt as if the child were restored to her, she still wished for medical aid: the surgeon, who was in attendance, had not left them more than half an hour; and as he had then several other patients in the place, her landlady thought he might be found at some of their houses. She offered to go in search of him, but as some little time would elapse before she could be ready, and as Jenny held the child in her arms, Felicia determined to seek him herself. She was always so neat that a few minutes sufficed to prepare her for her walk. Her inquiries were, however, for a long time fruitless: "he had been, but was gone;" still he might perhaps be found, and she pursued him till she came to a small house, situated in a dark narrow court. The door was open, and, assured

she had at length traced him, she rapped gently. No one answered the summons; and after repeating it two or three times she advanced into the room. Still no one appeared, and supposing she was mistaken, she was on the point of returning home, when she thought she heard some little movement proceed from an adjoining apartment, the door of which was partly open—she stepped forward.

The room was small and shabbily furnished. A tent-bed stood at its farthest extremity; and a little deal table, on which lay some medicines revealed, that it was the abode of sickness. It was partially illuminated by the dying embers of an expiring fire, and the rays of a single candle beaming in the socket. Its fluctuating beams rested on the person of a woman, who was reclining in a large old-fashioned chair supported by pillows. Her face was concealed by an arm of sickly whiteness, and a profusion of light shining hair which had escaped from beneath her cap. Her hand rested on the serene face of an infant reposing in the unruffled sweetness of childish slumbers, and the transparent thinness of the one mournfully contrasted with the rosy roundness of the other. Her head was

bent on its dimpled features, and a tear trickling through the half-shut fingers of the dying mother, betrayed the nature of her silent musings.

There is a something sacred in that grief which utters no complaint, which seems to shroud itself even from the sufferer, and Felicia involuntarily drew back, fearful of intruding on a sorrow so deep. But it was too late—her stealing footsteps caught the ear of a little dog sleeping by the fire, and his angry growl, as he fiercely sprung towards her, arrested the attention of the mourner. She suddenly raised her head, and threw back the dishevelled hair that shaded her face—the light fell full upon it, and discovered a countenance that, once seen, was destined never to be forgotten—for it was the countenance of Rosalind——

Felicia shrieked, and springing forward, clasped her in her arms. “Rosalind!” she cried; but Rosalind spoke not. She anxiously bent her head to view again those features which fond affection had indelibly imprinted on her heart, and saw she was insensible to her love—the fluttering spirit seemed scared from its frail abode. She shrieked, but no one came to her assistance. Rosalind was evidently its

only inhabitant then within ; and trying to compose her agitation, she sought to recover her to animation.

“ Rosalind !” she said, when the pallid lips and returning colour again partook of the hues of life. “ Rosalind, dear, dear Rosalind !” she repeated. Rosalind feebly opened her sunken eyes, and looked wistfully at her. Oh, they spoke a language that thrilled through Felicia’s soul.

“ My Rosalind !—my dear Rosalind—speak to me!—Oh, speak to me !” was all her tremulous lips could utter as she pressed them a thousand times to the cold cheek of her dying sister.

Rosalind appeared again on the point of relapsing into insensibility : her poor thin arms seemed unable to sustain the weight of the babe which yet rested on them ; and fearful of its falling, Felicia eagerly caught it in her own. Rosalind suddenly seemed to acquire new energy. She half raised herself from her pillows, and reclaimed her child.

“ You must not touch this child, Felicia,” she said, in a voice hollow, yet struggling for firmness—“ it is the child of shame !”

For a moment Felicia shrunk back, and gazed on her in speechless emotion—then strained both to her bosom.

“ My own—own Rosalind!” she sobbed—she could not proceed; but she still grasped them tightly in her arms, and the proud heart of Rosalind was subdued. Burning tears rushed to her aching eyes—with a weak, piteous cry she flung her arms around her sister, and gave way to the bitter agony that swelled her bosom to suffocation.

CHAPTER XI.

“La Beauté sans Vertù est une fleur sans parfum.”

*Can Beauty, blighted in an hour,
Find joy within her broken bower ?*

Lord Byron.

PRIDE, indignation, ten thousand indefinite feelings may influence the mind to overcome the first assault of temptation, but virtue alone will enable it firmly to resist the secret inclination of the heart, strengthened by the insidious blandishments of the tempter. Every succeeding interview weakened the resentment Rosalind had at first felt against Lord Edgermond, and confirmed that secret prepossession in his favour which she had ever felt. The attack which Miss Beaumont had made on her character first roused her to a

sense of her imprudence, and the next time she met him, she determined to behave with so much distance, that their intimacy must gradually subside into mere acquaintance. But her resolution, like most other resolutions when unsupported by a stronger principle than mere attention to propriety, or the established customs of the world, was of transient duration. Her coldness neither escaped his notice nor remark. When raillery failed to remove it, he boldly adverted to what he justly esteemed the cause: “hoped she had too much *spirit* to suffer herself to be influenced by an atrocious, yet contemptible libel, reflecting only on the authors, not the innocent objects of its malice. Surely it was very hard, that two persons who had known each other so many years were to be debarred from speaking with the unrestraint which necessarily attends long acquaintance? For his own part he despised such paltry assassin-like attacks, and would show his contempt for this, by behaving just as if he had never seen it.”

The giddy Rosalind listened to these insidious observations, till she grew almost ashamed of the mortification she had previ-

ously felt, and, like Lord Edgermond, resolved to evince her superiority, by forgetting the lesson it taught her. At this dangerous period her disagreements with Evanmore daily assumed a more serious complexion; and from his painful remonstrances she turned, with increased disgust, to the fascinating society of Lord Edgermond. He was still a bachelor, for Lady Charlotte was in a delicate state of health; and till she should have attained her twenty-second year, it had never been intended that they should marry. Report, too, whispered, that they had had some disagreements, which rendered their being ultimately united by no means certain. The cause of this perceptible coldness was unknown to all but themselves; the world, however, did not scruple to assign his continued intercourse with Rosalind as the chief, if not only, source of dissention; and Rosalind, vain, selfish, and imprudent, derived pleasure from its being supposed, that she had *power* to shake such an engagement. She boasted a contrariety of feelings and pursuits, all opposite, yet readily amalgamating, and all in subservience to the master-key to her heart. She was faithful to her

husband even in thought ; but she had learnt to regret her precipitate union, and to believe, that had she remained unmarried a few years longer, that point to which Lord Edgermond had so often alluded, might have been accomplished. Lady Charlotte, worn out by palpable indifference and a protracted engagement, might have voluntarily resigned her claims to his hand, and left him free to offer it to herself.

Such were her feelings and sentiments, when her careless imprudence put Evanmore in possession of that secret which it was so much her interest should never be revealed to him. Terrified at his violence, exasperated at the reproaches he poured out against her, she flew to the house of Lady Lucinda Lovelace. Lord Edgermond was there when she entered. Her flushed cheek, hurried accents, and affected vivacity, told him the tale she vainly strove to conceal—the rest may be imagined. Led on by vanity, goaded by resentment, and fired by ambition, the dictates of her heart triumphed over the feeble voice of virtue, and she consented to forfeit, for ever, all that rendered her valuable in the eyes of her destroyer.

Oh, if at such moments of peril, when the heart, softened by tenderness—the mind, subdued by vice—when the whisperings of virtue, and the checks of prudence are alike forgotten, if the wretched victims to passion would only anticipate, for a few short instants, the consequences of that step they are about to take, even that would save them from plunging into the dark gulf of infamy—tear away the delusive flowers that hide its horrors, and recall them again to the path of honour. If they would picture to themselves the anguish of their relatives—the scorn of the world—the secret contempt and distrust with which they must ere long behold each other—the pangs of fruitless repentance—the stings of unavailing remorse—the separation from every former friend, and those who once constituted their whole happiness,—if they would only strengthen their perhaps wavering resolution, by reflecting on the joy, the inward triumph, they would feel, when, the hour of danger past, they found themselves still in possession of innocence, esteem, friends, and rank, they would escape the throes of guilt—the finger of scorn.

From Paris they proceeded to Venice, and had there resided some months, when they learnt that Evanmore had obtained every reparation which the laws of his country could afford him. As every mortifying particular of her past folly and wickedness was thus brought more distinctly to her mental view, and as she was thus exposed to the aggravation, commentary, and sarcasm of the world, Rosalind became more anxious that Lord Edgermond should particularise those general promises he had made, that, when released from Mr. Evanmore, she should become his wife. Still, however, he forbore to mention any period for their union ; and high-spirited, generous, and confiding, she woul have scorned to feel or to appear suspicious. Week after week thus glided away. Rosalind tried to believe she only wanted the title of wife to make her happy ; yet, something like regret,—it could not be called remorse,—at having abandoned her home, mingled with a feeling that could not be termed fear,—yet bordered strangely on it,—that she would not soon again become a wife, fluttered round her heart.

“ This must soon be decided,” she thought.

“ Winter is fast coming on, and he will return to discharge his parliamentary duties : he must then make me his wife.”

Winter came—and with it Lord Edgermond began to talk of returning to England. He spoke of her accompanying him, but did not hint his wish to possess a legal claim to her obedience.

Rosalind felt an indescribable alarm steal over her. She had taken a fearful part in the eventful play of life. She had resigned the title of wife.—Was it possible she might never more possess it? Her heart grew cold as the dark surmise rose to her sickening fancy. She had read of such things in news-papers—heard of such things—talked of such things in parties and in ball-rooms ; and a thousand times she had speculated on the probable result, with more apathy and indifference than when perusing the fictitious sorrows of a heroine of romance. The barbed shaft was now come home to her own bosom—she felt its sting—she was doomed to feel it for ever.

She was expecting to become a mother, and she had once contemplated her situation with delight, as a further tie on the love and honour

of her betrayer ; but she scarcely knew why she became more terrified, and she determined to state, that she could never re-visit England till he had given her a right to his protection. It was a painful topic to introduce. Many times she tried to begin the subject, but as often her courage failed her. Her pride, too, revolted from what seemed to be an abject solicitation for that which he ought spontaneously to have offered. She remembered, with blended emotions of shame and grief, the wide alteration which had been effected in her situation since she forfeited her innocence. She contrasted the present period with that which had seen her on the eve of her marriage with Evanmore. His devoted attentions—the pride with which he contemplated the time that would make her his own. And again, a deeper sensation of regret, at having sacrificed a husband's love—a husband's home—thrilled through her bosom.

A packet from England ended this state of incertitude and misery. It contained, among many others, a letter from his uncle. He opened it with an interest that struck a dagger into her heart, and turning from her, saw a

few lines that instantly arrested his every feeling.

In language which ill concealed poignant regret and disappointed affection, Lord Wilberton announced, that Lady Charlotte Edgermond's decisive rejection of his hand, left him free to offer it to her on whom honour required that it should now be bestowed. While Lady Charlotte, he said, "could flatter herself, that the attentions he had so long been paying to the companion of his flight, were only those of common-place gallantry, however mortifying to her pride and her love, she had passed them over; but the final blow was now struck, and whatever it might cost her, she was determined to renounce him—solemnly renounce him—for ever."

To this communication, the lingering attachment of those who had long and sincerely loved him, added an entreaty, that he would, by his future conduct, endeavour to remove the stain he had thus thrown on a long line of illustrious ancestors; and seek to rescue his polluted name from further obloquy, by uniting himself to her who had relinquished, for his sake, all that is most precious to woman.

That he would remember he was living at a period when lawless anarchy would wish to level the distinctions of rank and virtue, and to tear down the judicious marks which, in past ages, were erected, to ennable the great and good, and give permanence to esteem—that he was placed in a situation where one part of the world regarded him with a jealous and invidious eye, while the other looked up to him for an example.

A farewell, whose tremulous characters betrayed how truly he was yet loved—how deeply his conduct was mourned, concluded a letter, in which affection, struggling with a sense of injury; and the pride of a noble mind contending for mastery over a heart that recoiled from casting off one dear, though degraded, was visible in every hurried sentence.

He stood motionless, and twice he read this letter with an agitation he neither could, nor attempted, to disguise. His general estimation in society, he knew, had hitherto been concealed from his cousin, for she had neither friend sufficiently sincere, nor enemy sufficiently malignant, to warn, or wound, her mind, by revealing it; and he had expected resent-

ment, reproaches, and alienation for a time; but that his uncle and Lady Charlotte could really abandon him, had never yet occurred to blacken his anticipations. "No, it could not be! he was sure they could not wholly renounce him—he was a son to Lord Wilberton: and his cousin—she lived but for him—loved him with an ardour that made such a step impossible! How often had she palliated his errors to his uncle, refused to believe aught to his disadvantage, and pardoned, from the excess of her attachment, those slights—that indifference to her wishes and feelings—which he knew, he felt, were unpardonable." He again perused this death-blow to his happiness—to the expectations he had so long cherished of forming an honourable, advantageous alliance. There was a something that chilled each rising hope. A striking mixture of tenderness and resolution, of severe calmness and evident anguish, ran through it, which, combined with the information that his letters and portrait were all sent back to his house in town, spoke volumes. They had cast him off, but he felt he could not thus cast off his early affections—he was now rejected by him whose kindness had supplied the

place of paternal love, by her whose heart he knew was still his own, though her spotless soul revolted from giving him that hand she had, at length, been reluctantly compelled to perceive he did not deserve.

An exclamation of grief and resentment burst from his lips as these reflections crowded to his imagination ; and, careless what he did, so that he escaped from her who had contributed to this disappointment, he rushed out of the room, and flew to his own, there to prepare for his immediate departure.

He had been affianced to Lady Charlotte Edgermond almost from childhood ; and though he could not be said to love her, he had ever contemplated their union with great complacency, till he saw Rosalind. Her transcendent beauty, life, and spirit, instantly attracted his admiration : he soon perceived he was an object of regard to this lovely creature, and once or twice he half wished his engagement to Lady Charlotte could be dissolved. But these feelings never found an abiding place in his bosom, when in her society. She did not possess the beauty of her rival, yet her manners were so soft and feminine, her cha-

racter so exemplary, he could not help respecting her; and though he persisted in flirting with Rosalind, when separated from her during the Winter months, which she always spent with her uncle in the country, he considered her as his wife whenever he thought seriously on the subject. But a neutral state is seldom long preserved in such affairs; and as his attentions to Rosalind gradually became more pointed, more particular, Lady Charlotte, at length, took the alarm; and to allay her just displeasure, he promised to discontinue his intimacy with her altogether. When, however, they again met, and her situation as a married woman equally forbade her hopes, and Lady Charlotte's fears, he took some pains to unite the cord he had so rudely snapt. He was gratified by perceiving his secret ascendancy over her, and vain of the attentions of such a woman. Like herself, he was no mean proficient in the art of coquetry: "flirting was, after all, a mere milk-and-water amusement; and if *she*, under such circumstances, chose to laugh and chat with him, he did not know that he could reasonably be called upon to decline the pleasure from any fastidious scrupu-

pulous fear of injuring her in the estimation of a *coterie* of prudes and scandal-mongers."

Certain that Lady Charlotte had now no cause for resentment, he listened to her remonstrances on the failure of his promise, with nonchalance or indignation, and a slight misunderstanding had existed between them some time, when Miss Beaumont's paragraph met his eyes. He had never contemplated Rosalind's ruin—never thought of doing more than amuse himself with her as a beautiful volatile woman, but a sudden revolution was, as by magic, affected in his feelings. "Did the world really anticipate such a result from their intercourse—had her conduct been such as to authorize a suspicion that she would sacrifice for him her husband—her home? Was she indeed attainable?" Lady Charlotte faded before his eyes—he had no other tie to bind him to virtue, and taking advantage of her disagreement with her husband, he sought and won her.

But the dominion of violent passion is always fleeting and insecure—the season of guilty happiness short and precarious. There can be no real pleasure in any pursuit which

the heart does not approve, and which tends to sink in our estimation the object of our attachment—no felicity in an engagement with one who has lost our confidence. Admiration may be kept alive by beauty, but love can be preserved only by esteem ! How, then, is it possible for a woman to continue to feel affection for a man who has dishonoured both her and himself, or how can he respect her who has been weak and unprincipled enough, to resign herself to a guilty passion ? Vain will be their efforts to conceal from themselves and each other their secret contempt and wretchedness ; their very efforts will grow burthensome, and they will awake from a short fever of unreal transport to endless misery. They will discover that the empire of unhallowed joy is neither firm nor lasting—that they have forfeited their honour without gaining happiness by the sacrifice.

In a few weeks his Lordship was roused from the delirium of pleasure he had felt at his success, and was beginning to indulge in no very agreeable speculations as to the termination of the affair, when Lord Wilberton's letter decided his growing apprehensions. But it produced no other feelings than those of rage—

of mortification. The imprudent victim to his arts, and her own vanity, had lost with her virtue half her charms even in his eyes. Lady Charlotte, pure and heroic, acquired more than her lost power over his heart : he admired the conduct which he deplored, and he curst the hour which had crowned his pursuit. Yet he did not censure the passions which had led to their mutual ruin, nor was inclined to make any reparation for an injury which he ascribed to Rosalind's own unguarded folly in the outset ;—much less that proposed by his exemplary relative.

Lord Edgermond had no idea of virtue in man ; but vice in woman he contemplated with that loathing abhorrence—that unbending, stern severity which is so commonly the accompaniment of libertine principles. He was determined not to place his honour in the hands of a woman who treacherously resigned that of another, and recoiled, with feelings of disgust, from an everlasting engagement with one who had voluntarily resigned the inestimable gem which could alone give her interest in his eyes, after her loveliness no longer possessed the attraction of novelty.

“What prudent man would dare to make her the depository of his peace, who failed to protect that of another? What tie can bind you?” were the cutting questions Lord Edgermond addressed to the agonized Rosalind, when driven to desperation by the certainty of having lost Lady Charlotte, and goaded to madness by her reproaches, when on his avowing that he would never give her a legal claim to his hand, she poured out the bitterness of her spirit.

Rosalind heard no more. She had long found herself on the verge of a precipice—she suddenly felt precipitated from its dizzy height, to an abyss, deep, dreadful, unfathomable—and existence became a blank.

When she first awoke to consciousness, she perceived a sealed packet lying on the table directed to her in Lord Edgermond’s hand. She tore it open, and found a few farewell lines, accompanied by a bill for two thousand pounds. With phrenzied violence she dashed it on the ground, trampled upon it, and then again lost all recollection of the terrible events of the day.

To these paroxysms of rage and despair, succeeded bursts of grief and shame. She in-

closed his detested present with shuddering fingers in a blank cover, and, careless what became of her, returned to England. London, the home of the outcast, who has no other wherein to hide his head, became the residence of the fallen Rosalind ; and the first information that met the wretched wanderer, was, the death of Evanmore by the hand of Lord Edgermond. Remorse, dark and direful, now possessed her soul. She took lodgings in a sequestered street, and there became the mother of a child, whose father she regarded with abhorrence.

For some days she refused to see it. A variety of passions preyed at once on a spirit, all of whose feelings were as acute as they were undisciplined ; and burying her face in the bed-clothes, she gloomily wished the last wish of the unfortunate, that life itself might close. Fearful to what extent her anguish might drive her, the nurse, in defiance of her commands, brought the infant into the room, and placed it by her side. Its feeble moans reached her heart—the tide of nature returned—with piercing cries she flung back the clothes, and pressed with convulsive emotion to her bosom,

the poor unhappy babe baptized in its mother's tears—unhallowed by its parents blessing—unsanctioned by its father's name.

When all smiles upon us, we find no difficulty in suppressing the whisperings of conscience, or in stifling reflection in the sparkling bowl of pleasure. But on the couch of sickness, in the lonely chamber of misery and disgrace, we vainly try to shun its awful warnings. Rosalind was now unable to escape the voice she had so often hushed in dissipation ; and remorse, if not penitence, haunted her dreary dwelling. The unrequited tenderness of him whom she had deserted—of him whom her guilty paramour had consigned to an early grave, arose in judgment against her ; and, her mind weakened by suffering and solitude, in every passing breeze she fancied she heard his reproaching accents, in every indistinct shadow beheld his bleeding form. With the cold chill of horror, she would turn from these terrific visions to the remembrance of Lady Charlotte Edgermond. Neglected and deceived, she could now pity the anguish she had once delighted to inflict on her. She recollect ed the ungenerous pleasure she experienced at the

idea of supplanting her—the dishonourable efforts she had made to deprive her of him to whom she had been engaged from her childhood. These pangs of self-reproach were heightened by contrasting her conduct with that of her she had injured. In the tumult of his feelings at Lady Charlotte's decisive rejection of his hand, and the hurry of his escape during Rosalind's insensibility, Lord Edgermond left behind him his uncle's letter. Frantic with rage, and half hoping to find his desertion had originated from his family, she had torn it open; and the noble, dignified, generous, virtuous behaviour of her illustrious rival, planted an additional dagger in her heart.

Under the deep humiliation produced by these reflections, she learnt to think even Lord Edgermond's reproach, though its recollection pierced her soul almost to madness, not undeserved. "What pledge could she give of her constancy to him, who had violated the trust reposed in her by a husband? What assurance could she offer, or he receive, that her fickle heart might not have owned the dominion of some other attachment when time should have destroyed the charm of variety? What—what

tie, indeed, *could bind her* to future virtue, who had already unblushingly relinquished her honour to a vile seducer!"

But the stings of guilt, of disappointment, of shame, were not the only evils she was soon doomed to experience. The splendid ornaments she had worn on the night of her elopement, were all that now remained, to supply the wants of humanity: and Rosalind, the gay—the thoughtless Rosalind—nursed in the lap of affluence—she who had a few short months before despised the comforts of her husband's home—spurned at the bare idea of moderation, was reduced to the hard task of selling the glittering baubles which had so often adorned her lovely form. She felt convinced she should not survive the moment of offering them for sale; and as she wetted the cheek of her infant with a tear of heart-rending misery, she fancied it would be the last she should ever imprint on its unconscious face.

But though some dreadful stroke may part the spirit from its suffering companion, the hand of grief seldom inflicts a sudden blow; and Rosalind lived over this bitter moment.

As she turned from the counter where she had left these last mementos of her former state, the shop-door opened, and Jenny, with the child she had deserted in her arms, entered. She pressed her hands over the thick veil that enveloped her features, and tried to leave the shop. But her steps were so tottering, she feared to proceed, lest her fainting should reveal her to the keen eyes of the scrutinizing Jenny. She soon perceived she had no reason to fear detection, and the pleasure she felt in making this discovery was followed by a sensation of misery, deep and piercing.

The shop was a sort of bazaar, containing a variety of different articles—they came, it appeared, to purchase a trifling toy ; and Jenny's loquacity speedily revealed, that it was to be a present from herself.

“ I should like that,” said the child, turning with indifference from the variety of trifles Jenny and the shopman severally pressed on her attention, pointing, with her little finger, to a gilded coach drawn by six white horses, with most imposing tails and manes.

“ Oh, but Miss Rosa must not think of

that," said Jenny; "that can never be her's—was never intended for her—she must be contented with some of these."

The child instantly averted her wistful eyes, and catching up a little curly headed dog, departed, apparently delighted with her acquisition.

"God bless her!" thought Rosalind, as she followed Jenny's tall ungainly person, for the first time without ridicule, "God bless her! A few such lessons in my childhood, and I had not been what I am!"

That Felicia would never suffer her child to perish, she had ever believed; but she was ignorant of her having been driven from Lady Wyedale's on her account; for, fearful of betraying herself by making any inquiries relative to her connexions, she knew little more than that Evanmore was dead.

Anxious to see where the child resided, she pursued them till they reached their humble home. Felicia, in deep mourning, met them at the gate; and in a moment her ready mind comprehended all— She fainted ere she reached her lodgings, and for some weeks was too ill to leave her room. She then determined

on taking obscure apartments near those of Felicia. She would never make herself known, but it was a happiness, to think she was near her.

When able to remove, she hired a coach ; and after a fatiguing inspection of many different houses, finally pitched upon the cottage where Felicia found her. Its wretchedness and privacy, as well as its cheapness, were recommendations to her gloomy mind ; and tortured by guilt, terrified by the approach of poverty, her miserable existence was fast wearing to a close, when Felicia once more met her dying sight.

CHAPTER XII.

“ Tho’ yet but young, my bloom of life is gone !”

“ Look on this pallid cheek, ye who have known
Its earlier brightness, and have smiling said,
That ye could wish transported to your own
The fresh suffusion of its healthful red.
Where is the eye’s quick lustre ? all is fled—
My heavy glance scarce brooks the blaze of day.
Where are the heart’s warm answers ? chilled and dead
In my lone breast ! And yet but short delay
Ere from these lips, perhaps, the last breath ebbs away.
There are few earthly feelings touch me now
My soul is dark and barren——”

Brooke.

THE afflictions of the world, however severe, are frequently lightened by the hand of friendship—the consolations of hope; but those of guilt admit of no alleviation: they are ever

present to the imagination—are cheered by no transient gleam of brightness—no distant glimmering of happier days. For them there is no balm in Gilead—no hope, save that they may, in mercy, be blotted out of the awful register of Heaven.

Felicia wished to remove Rosalind from the dismal abode, in which her life was fast ebbing away, to her own. But Rosalind refused to quit it.

Indifference, or reconciliation to a state of infamy and disgrace, the last stage of the abandoned, was a depth of sin she had not reached. She abhorred herself. Guilty, yet not depraved, she contemplated, with loathing sensations of disgust, the exquisite form which had been the cause of her crimes, and turned with shame from the light of Heaven. Her present habitation was consonant to her feelings. A more agreeable residence would have been a scene of garish misery—could have reflected no ray of comfort on the dreary view within her. She felt a dismal satisfaction in seeing all around in unison with her darkened prospects.

Her griefs required not the overcharging of

fancy to render them more poignant, yet her lively imagination magnified her misfortunes, and brought, like a *camera obscura*, every dreadful particular of her past folly and iniquity more distinctly to her mental eye.

But there is a sort of sullen composure which arises from the cold serenity of a broken heart—a heart conscious it has drank the last dregs of the cup of affliction—felt the last shoot of earthly suffering; and to the wild ebullitions of frantic wretchedness, succeeded the silent, settled calmness of a spirit hopeless—rayless—despairing. She made no complaints—shed no tears—even the attentions of Felicia seemed at times almost irksome; and with a languid or peevish monosyllable she usually repressed every attempt at conversation. Vain was each effort to rouse her from this torpor, to point her attention to another world; and though after a hasty reply or impatient gesture, she always endeavoured, by a faint smile, or affectionate question, to evince her sense of her sister's kindness, she refused all consolation, and appeared to taste the only happiness of which she was now capable, when

suffered to brood over her wrongs in dreary silence.

Felicia's spirits sometimes vanished with these ineffectual exertions to cheer the despondency of a broken heart—to illumine the dark path of the expiring soul. But she never relaxed in her silent secret endeavours, till she saw they were becoming wearisome, when she would instantly desist; for she knew the moment for receiving such impressions is not that when the mind is soured by peevishness, or distracted by pain; and seating herself quietly by her side, would try to forget all, but that she was sick, and in misery. But she fruitlessly sought to lose the remembrance of the past, and she wept as imagination portrayed her such as she was when they last met. The glow of hope tinting her blooming beauties—her brilliant eyes sparkling with vivacity—her laughing lips responsive only to joy—her open brow unclouded by a passing care—the look of radiance—the light ethereal step.—How was she changed! Grief and Remorse had set their dark stamp upon her youthful countenance; her cheek was faded by anguish; her eyes

sunk in despair; her brow contracted by anxiety and suspicion. The luxuriant hair, once decorated with the nicest art, hanging in broken disordered masses, shaded the colourless face and lips; the agile, graceful form, rounded by the hand of symmetry, bending forward in habitual dejection, and wasted till fond affection shrunk from beholding a breathing skeleton. Still, loveliness sat on the faded features, but it was a loveliness that rendered the ruin yet more affecting to the heart; and when the contrast was too torturing for endurance, Felicia would fly to her home to recover that serenity which she vainly tried to retain.

“Poor mourner!” she murmured, when, worn out by suffering, she watched her as she slept the unquiet sleep of wretchedness, while her infant lay buried in tranquil slumbers in her arms, its cherub face resting on her aching bosom.

“Poor mourner, thy glory is past! thy sun is set! Once thou wast innocent as the lovely babe reposing in peace on thy lacerated breast —thy heart beat but to joy—thine eye saw only the bright visions of bliss—thy bosom swelled, but to triumph; and fearless of danger,

thou proudly sailed down the stream of life. But thy course was short as glittering—a storm arose—a dark cloud overshadowed thy dawn—thou hadst no anchor of safety to preserve thee, and thy frail bark, tossed by the whirlwind of passions, was soon wrecked on the shores of infamy."

Many weeks elapsed ere Felicia dared to communicate Evanmore's message. It was received with transports of agonized feeling that shook her feeble frame to dissolution.

There is in a last farewell, a something that silences all resentment—obliterates all offences,—that mocks alike our fondest love and our direst hate. Evanmore, such as he was when first he sought her hand—when in the days of her innocence he hung on her words, proudly gazed on her beauty, rose fresh to her memory; and all the errors which imagination had tinged with the colouring of crimes, all the sophistries with which she had tried to believe he deserved her desertion, vanished from her mind. She saw not only the murdered, but the gentle Evanmore, stung to madness by his injuries; and she felt and appreciated that nobleness of temper, which had blessed and forgiven his

destroyer. For many hours, she lay in a state of insensibility; and when restored to reason, presented so ghastly a picture of guilt and remorse, that Felicia feared to contemplate those features so lately exulting in beauty, now distorted by despair and self-reproach. She had sometimes before tried to lead her thoughts to this subject; but, terrified at the excess of her emotion, she never again made the most distant approach to it; and a week had passed, marked by more than usual dreariness, when the woman of the house hastily entered, to say she was wanted. Felicia felt alarmed, but, trying to conquer her terror lest it might agitate Rosalind, she rose up, and on leaving the room, met Jenny with a countenance of such mingled import, that at the first glance she could scarcely divine whether joy or sorrow was its predominant expression; but the second unequivocally announced, that she was not only the bearer of no every-day intelligence, but struggling to overcome secret satisfaction.

"My Lady Wyedale has had a plectic fit," she said, before Felicia could inquire the cause of this summons: "the servants say, as 'tis all over with her poor sawl! and the housekeeper

is a-crying her eyes out. She'll not, perhaps, meet with such another place in a hurry, for it might so happen, as those that step into my Lady Wyedale's shoes, may not want her." Her cheek flushed—her eye sparkled, as she spoke; and at that moment every honour, every luxury, every advantage, appertaining to the situation of housekeeper was brought, as by magic, to her vision, and converged in the suite of apartments belonging to that important personage in the mansion of Lady Wyedale. "She has sent for you, ma'am, to come to tend her. I reckon by this time, she has found out she can't get your like very easily, and my Lady Wyedale is not the body to quarrel with her bread and butter when it comes to. I did not come forwards ma'am," she continued, "for I thought that may be—that—that—" she hesitated—and the proud consequential look and tone were subdued, "that my Lady might not like to see me."

There was so much instinctive delicacy in this simple action, that Felicia changed the look with which she intended to reprimand these comments on Lady Wyedale into one of silent gratitude.

Between Rosalind and Jenny, there had existed a considerable degree of secret enmity since the dissolution of Felicia's engagement with Evanmore ; and though Rosalind was too proud to betray the agony with which she contemplated their meeting under such calamitous circumstances, Felicia had anticipated her wishes, and guarded her from this pang by requesting that Jenny would never leave the child in her absence. To conceal from her that she had met her sister, would have been impossible ; she therefore hinted at her indisposition and wish of seclusion. Jenny felt all her former aversion die away ; and though she would have liked that she should see how fond the child was become of her—how nicely she kept its clothes—how well-behaved it was, and how prettily she had taught it to read, she carefully abstained from seeking any pretences for going near her residence.

On her return to Rosalind's apartment, to prepare for her walk to Russel-square, she found her in such a state of trembling anxiety, that, apprehending she feared some misfortune had befallen her child, she hastened to remove

it, by stating the real cause of her intended absence.

Rosalind listened in silence. The name of Lady Wyedale had never escaped her lips, nor had she alluded to her little Rosalind more than once, when in broken accents she thanked Felicia for her protection: yet, though she shed no tear, nor did she speak, she seemed restless and uneasy. “Felicia!” she at length cried, as Felicia rose to depart, “should she—you know who I mean—” her voice shook, and her features became fearfully wild and haggard, —“should she, when I am no more, consent to receive my Rosa under her roof, say, that I forbad it. Let her not, Felicia—let her not remain with that woman one hour alone. I was not born to dishonour. Once I had feelings kindly and prone to goodness as your own. Oh, had she instilled one virtuous precept into my infant mind, eradicated one vicious propensity, or taught me to subdue my wayward passions, I had not been the wretched—abject—infamous thing that I am!”

A loud cry of anguish burst from her quivering lips, and wringing her hands with the

bitterness of despair, she buried her face in the pillows that supported her declining frame.

There were moods and moments when her despondence seemed to reach even *beyond* the grave, and Felicia, as she watched her eye sometimes half-raised as if in silent supplication to Heaven—then cast down with a wild and frantic emotion, as though hopeless of that mercy she wished to obtain, flattered herself that the fell pangs of remorse were gradually displacing by that life-giving grief which brings its own antidote, which heals while it seems to inflame, which pours its Heavenly balm into the wound for whose agonies there is no other medicine; but never had she seen in her ravings so much that seemed to show the heart was touched by contrition—that her compunction was the compunction of penitence; and glad tears trembling in her eyes, she said, “The child of my darling sister, shall never be subjected to a temptation from which I can guard her. And—and this too—” she pressed her lips on the dimpled face of the laughing infant, which lay on its mother’s knees, “unless you would wish him to—to—go—”

Rosalind suddenly raised her sunken head.

A deep hectic passed over her livid features—“To his father!” her eye kindled into fury as she spoke,—“a wretch who can whisper and flatter, and deceive, betray, desert, ruin, and smile at the desolation he has effected! He protect him! no—let him perish first—perish ere—” she caught the terrified boy, pressed him with convulsive violence to her heaving bosom, and burst into an agony of tears.

“Then, I will be his protector,” said Felicia, hanging over her with fond solicitude, and he shall be dear to me as my Rosalind.

Rosalind answered only by sobs of mingled joy and grief, as she clasped her to her heart. The babe born in misery, and once seen with abhorrence, had at length awakened a deeper interest in her bosom than that which first excited her maternal feelings. It had been her only companion during months of solitude and sorrow; and joint heir with her, to shame and misfortune, it seemed more allied to her—nearer—dearer.

“I can now die in peace,” she, at length, murmured; “and yet, to subject you to such a burthen. You, an angel of purity, you become the protector of such a child! | Oh, what an

aggravation of misery to see the ignominy which covers us, overshadow all that we love! To feel, when we go down into the grave, that no tears can be shed for us, but those of shame—no sighs of regret, but that we had ever been!"

She covered her face, and wept with the acutest anguish.

"These are blessed tears," said Felicia, as she mixed her own with them; "they are the tears of penitence."

Rosalind drew back. Pride, whose empire often survives amid the ruin, remorse, and shame he has affected, lingered over his prey. She could bear to speak of her crime; but the heart was not yet sufficiently softened to endure that it should be alluded to by another; and fearful of wounding where she meant to heal, Felicia left her with a sigh to seek the abode of Lady Wyedale.

When she entered her Ladyship's apartment, she could not help contrasting its gaudy magnificence with the poverty that marked the one she had just quitted. But the difference existed only in the rooms—the hand of death was equally imprinted on the features of their respective inhabitants.

"And thus it must be with us all," she thought. "Death cannot be disguised—its features are the same in the monarch as in the beggar—its aspect as chill when enshrouded in purple and fine linen, as in the tattered chamber of human wretchedness."

Lady Wyedale received her with a strange mixture of pleasure and hauteur; slightly alluded to her having been rather indisposed; and, without deigning to solicit her services, hinted that they would not be unacceptable.

Conscious that her necessary attentions to Rosalind would preclude the possibility of her devoting much time to Lady Wyedale, Felicia only generally observed she should be happy to pay her any little attention in her power.

Seemingly unsuspicuous of her meaning, Lady Wyedale said, "You will come here before evening, I presume; and, as I suppose you are still bent on never parting from the child, you may bring her; only mind, I won't be harassed by hearing her squalls all day long."

This proposition rendering all evasion idle, Felicia avowed, that she had met with her sister, and that she was dying.

Lady Wyedale professed herself astonished

at her intelligence, and yet more amazed at Felicia noticing such a creature; one who had destroyed her happiness, and disgraced all connected with her.

"Oh, madam," said Felicia, "if we would hope to be forgiven, must we not try to pardon? or shall not even outraged virtue be appeased by the penitence of the offender? Shall we turn the proud eye of pharisaical purity on a soul humbled to the dust—mourning its iniquity even unto death?"

Lady Wyedale heard her with a cynical smile, and in that smile Felicia saw, that though the body was impaired, the mind remained unaltered by disease, unsoftened by the near approach of dissolution. Felicia replied only by a look of the liveliest compassion, and as she gazed on her earthy face, mourned the fate of a woman thus on the eve of quitting a world which had engaged her every thought, to enter one she had never allowed herself to contemplate.

For some minutes Lady Wyedale balanced between a desire to turn her a second time out of doors, and a wish to receive such attentions as she could conscientiously offer. She was really ill—had often experienced the want of

her dutiful assiduities, and interest conquered pride.

As she had never been accustomed to spend the night with Rosalind, Felicia selected that season for her visits to Lady Wyedale, and four nights she had watched by her side when she became so much worse, that she resolved not to leave her in the morning: she therefore dispatched a note to Jenny, desiring she would inform Rosalind's landlady she could not see her that day.

Lady Wyedale appeared gratified by this voluntary attention, and Felicia seized the favourable moment, to entreat she would permit her to send for some clergyman.

Lady Wyedale seemed revived by this proposition to new vigour; and with a haughty scowl, she requested she would not take such a liberty again.

“She was in no danger—all her medical attendants assured her she was not—she begged she might not be hurried by any methodistical cant.”

“My dear aunt,” cried Felicia, “I wish, sincerely wish, they may not be mistaken; but even, if my apprehensions are groundless, your

illness will not be increased by receiving, from the lips of a clergyman, such advice and admonitions as are necessary to make us acquainted with our real situation,—with the hopes or fears we ought to encourage ; and even the confession of our sins is an act of contrition which—”

Lady Wyedale interrupted this address, by assuring her, she was not conscious of having any sins to confess. “ She had injured no one —had always done her duty, and more than her duty. She had never run away from her husband—she had never been the cause of murder—she had never contracted debts she was unable to liquidate—she had always set a good example to her fellow-creatures.”

But though she strove to hide her feelings, it was evident to Felicia she had taken the alarm. She desired more physicians might be called in, and while she tried to maintain a dignified indifference of manner, she looked restless and uneasy.

Yet, though she was crossing the dark valley of the shadow of death without a gleam of light to illumine her dreary passage, the gloomy pass was not shrouded in horror. It

was rather the unwillingness to leave this world than the fear of entering the next that clouded her rigid brow. She had during a long life so successfully banished every thought of eternity, and succeeded in persuading herself she had nothing to apprehend when the far-distant day should arrive, that the delusion still continued to wrap her senses in a fatal calm. Death was to her an unpleasing something which must be submitted to, not the messenger of a summoning God. She had always dismissed as quickly as possible every thought on the subject; but when such reflections did occasionally obtrude themselves for a moment, she never doubted that she, like all the rest of her friends, should go to Heaven, when under the unfortunate necessity of leaving her superb residence in Russell-square, and the other appendages of wealth and consequence which made the exchange appear so little inviting. She remembered she had usually attended some place of public worship once every Sunday, when nothing particular occurred to prevent her. Had always punctually discharged her debts, generally given something when called upon for a subscription by persons of note, never transgressed

the rules of decorum, or broken the laws of her country. But the great pillar on which she rested her confidence of future felicity was, her kindness in protecting her nieces. How far she had been influenced by the consideration that they were the grand-children of a nobleman, never occurred to diminish the disinterested lustre of this act of benevolence. That the one had been made miserable by her harshness, and the other ruined by her pernicious indulgence, never gave her a moment's disquiet; nor did the recollection that both had been relentlessly driven from her roof,—cast off for ever when they presumed to oppose her arbitrary will, appear to her the smallest tarnish on her claim to future reward. Thus satisfied with what she had done, it is not strange, that what she had *not* done never occurred to disturb her mind, or alarm her conscience.

As she watched the workings of her struggling soul, her impatient spirit, Felicia felt almost terrified. She had seen death before, but it was the death of the Christian—Death was then robbed of its sting—the Grave of its victory; and the dying objects of her tender-

ness seemed to acquire new glory as they mounted to their native skies.

"Are there any hopes for my aunt?" said she, as she anxiously led her physician up stairs.

"None," replied he, "it is impossible she can live many days longer, or at least highly improbable."

"Oh, then give her some hint of the awfulness of her situation!" said she, eagerly.

"I shall be thought very unfeeling," said he. "Medical men seldom volunteer such an unpleasant piece of information."

"Unfeeling!" cried she, laying her hand on his arm, "unfeeling! Oh, if death were extinction, it might be so; but when the enfranchised spirit only becomes more alive, more susceptible to happiness or misery by its separation from the body, is it not cruel to deprive it of those fleeting hours, perhaps minutes, which may enable it to make its peace with Heaven?"

He shrugged his shoulders, observed that it was all very true, and, encouraged by this hint, on finding his patient much worse, ventured to insinuate there might be danger.

Lady Wyedale changed colour; then, recovering herself, said, "Felicia, did you advise him to this step?"

Felicia would not deny that she had.

"I guessed as much. But I don't think I am so near death as you would wish to believe; and if I am, I have not lived a worse life than my neighbours."

"Our responsibility is with ourselves," said Felicia, in a hesitating voice.

"Ah, I see your kind intention; but though I am no methodist, I hope I may not be so bad as you good people are always willing to think your fellow-creatures; and if I had not been shamefully neglected by those whose affection of peculiar sanctity renders their conduct less excusable, I do not think I should ever have been in this deplorable situation."

Felicia was too humane, to remind her aunt at such a moment, that she had been not only driven from her doors, but forbade to enter them as a visitor.

Lady Wyedale closed her eyes, as if inclined to sleep; and Felicia, fearful of disturbing the unquiet doze into which she soon fell, remained almost motionless, till she heard a faint groan;

she flew to the bed—Lady Wyedale had experienced another stroke, and though she lingered some hours longer, she never more opened her eyes on that world which had bounded her every desire.

CHAPTER XIII.

Why dost thou build the hall, son of the winged days?
Thou lookest from thy tower to-day, yet a few years,
and the blast of the desert comes, it howls in thy empty
court.

Ossian.

IT is the conviction that the friend or relative who has left us is fled to brighter realms that can alone assuage the sorrow of our separation. Felicia did not love her aunt, but she deplored, with the truest grief, that she was thus snatched away in the midst of unsubstantial hopes, and unchristian-like feelings. To the latest period of her illness she had appeared to retain all the malignancy of hatred—all the strong passions which had been her distinguishing characteristic. She knew that Rosalind was languishing on the bed of sickness, broken-hearted, and de-

serted by all but Felicia ; yet she had never felt a ray of commiseration, or a sentiment of forgiveness. She had, once or twice, indirectly tried to learn the extent of her misery ; but Felicia saw it was with no desire of relieving it, and she never satisfied her curiosity.

The instant she had recovered from the shock of seeing Lady Wyedale die, Felicia sent for Mr. Leycester, and suggested, that his father should be desired to visit London immediately. Mr. Leycester appeared extremely surprised : “would certainly do as she desired ; but suggested, that she had better search her Ladyship’s *escriitor* for her will—no doubt one would be found—it might render his father’s journey unnecessary.”

Though Felicia had not the smallest idea that any thing would be bequeathed to her, and as it was most probable all might be left to Mr. James himself, she opened, in his presence, all her Ladyship’s drawers and papers, ineffectually. No will—no memorandum appeared—no intimation of her last wishes, excepting a loose packet, containing some valuable jewels which she had worn on the night of the masquerade—the last time she had ever been full-dressed.

they were simply marked in lead pencil, “for Rosalind, if she succeeds.”

Mr. Leycester was “so surprised, he could not believe the evidence of his senses—could not yet help thinking a will would be found.” As, however, he had long been her law-agent, and as none appeared, Felicia entertained a contrary opinion; and, at her request, he dispatched a letter to his father, requiring his immediate presence.

To Felicia this was no unexpected disappointment. She had long foreseen the triumph of the other branch of the Leyesters, and had her Ladyship only slightly remembered her, she would have been quite satisfied with her division of the fortune. She remained in the house from motives of respect to so near a relative, till her uncle arrived, and then returned to her drooping sister, to leave her no more.

A long and extremely well-written paragraph in the newspapers stating,—that after a life spent in the exercise of every virtue, and a long and painful indisposition, borne with exemplary fortitude, she had met death with Christian-like resignation,—announced the gratitude of her brother for the rich atonement Lady Wyedale

had, at length, made for years of past unkindness. But though gratitude for her unlooked-for munificence made Mr. Leycester thus unmindful of her few claims to the eulogy he had bestowed on her character, he was not deficient in kindness of heart, or generosity of disposition. One of his nieces he now pitied, and the other had his warmest respect: he, therefore, sent for Felicia, and after desiring she would give the jewels Lady Wyedale had once intended for her sister to her, he requested their acceptance of a thousand pounds each.

Felicia had nothing quixotic in her character, nor was her mind too delicate to bear the weight of an obligation. She thought her uncle, under such circumstances, could well afford to part with two thousand pounds, and to her the sum would be affluence; she therefore accepted his presents, with many expressions of affectionate gratitude: and, after sincerely wishing him health and life to enjoy the fortune he had acquired, left him, to communicate the pleasing intelligence to Rosalind. She had hitherto forborene to mention, that both were discarded by Lady Wyedale, but her silence had confirmed Rosalind's fears, and

a languid smile lighted up her faded features, as she expressed her joy at the idea, that Felicia would be thus a little relieved from the heavy responsibility of providing for both her children ; but the feeble frame was now fast approaching to its last long home. The machine remained ; but the identity was gone. Her eyes were become fearfully bright : there was something unearthly, yet unheavenly, in her appearance—beauty lingered, but it was a beauty that had ceased to please—it was the terrific beauty of the grave. She marked the change, and seemed to experience a gloomy happiness in perceiving she was drawing so near to the termination of her painful pilgrimage.

The days were now long and intensely hot. Rosalind felt the languor of declining strength increased by the closeness of her situation ; and again, but vainly, Felicia petitioned her to leave it. She continued to shun the light of day, and Felicia, at length, resigned the attempt to remove her as hopeless. Feverish and faint, she refused almost every species of nourishment, but that derived from fruit ; and anxious to anticipate her wants, Felicia, one

evening, determined to walk to a neighbouring gardener, who had then some fine grapes on sale. Enervated by a constant residence in a sick apartment, and desirous of selecting the best she could procure, she resolved to be her own purchaser, and taking a small basket in her hand, she commenced her walk.

It was a lovely sun-set, and its parting radiance tinted the surrounding landscape with gleams of golden lustre. A dazzling splendor rested on the tops of the distant hills, and threw a richly purple hue over their heathy banks. Scarcely a breath of air waved the leafy branches of the luxuriant trees, that sheltered the flowery lane she was traversing, or curled the little waves of a clear blue rill that murmured by the side of her path. Not a breeze ruffled the blushing petals of the wild roses that shed their fragrant perfume on the air—not a sound interrupted the stillness of evening, but the gushing of the stream that poured its babbling waters through this solitude. The cattle were reposing in the shade—the bees were gone to their straw-bound homes—the black-bird had forgotten its vesper melody—

the kaw of the rook was hushed to silence ; and as she pursued her lonely walk, Felicia felt affected by the saintly repose around her.

“ Oh, that Rosalind’s mind partook of this calm serenity !” she thought ; “ yet let me not repine : who can tell the acuteness of her remorse—the deepness of her penitence—or who conceive the brightness of that scene which may open on the soul, which, like her’s, has paid its crime with its life ! Oh, may she be that sinner over whom even angels shall rejoice !”

As she continued these reflections, the long glowing train of light that illumined the horizon, faded into a grey stream of dingy lustre, and the balmy softness of the air changed into a close sultriness—a stillness which is often found to precede a thunder-storm. A few light fleecy transparent clouds sailed swiftly over the lowering vault of Heaven, and large broad drops of rain falling at intervals on the dusty road, impelled her to quicken her steps, that she might reach home before the tempest began to rage. Her efforts were, however, ineffectual—the sky became suddenly dark—a faint flash of lightning soon

met her eyes, and a low peal of thunder murmuring through the heated atmosphere, announced it had already commenced. Again she hastened onwards; but she vainly tried to escape the heavy rain that soon fell in torrents, and deluged the parched ground. Her unshaken confidence in that protecting Power who suffers not even a sparrow to fall unnoticed to the earth, rendered her fearless of danger; but as the voice of the Deity, she listened to its tremendous reverberation with those solemn feelings it ought to inspire. The storm soon beat her defenceless form with pitiless fury; the thunder, at first muttering, now rolled on the ear in terrific percussion—sheets of pale-coloured flame, for a second, shed a flood of unearthly light over the darkened landscape, only to make the succeeding obscurity more awful. A shrill wind sprung up, and waved the branches of the trees already bowed down by the weight of the torrent across her path; while the birds, seemingly startled at the fearfulness of the scene, flew low and wildly around her, uttering short plaintive notes as in distress. Felicia felt her heart deeply impressed; and with a sensation of

dread, she was silently commanding herself to Him whom the winds and waves obey, when, as she flew towards her humble habitation, which now appeared in sight, her eye caught the figure of a gentleman, contending like herself, with the elements. "It could not be—no, it was impossible!"—The stranger approached—"Yes—she was not mistaken—it was Mr. Berkely himself!" For a moment she drew back—then hastily advanced. She had no right to be offended at his apparent neglect, nor was he answerable for that of his family; and with an embarrassed smile, she tried to say, she was happy to see him.. He replied with almost equal hesitation, and in silence they walked a few paces. Felicia felt distressed at her evident confusion, and, after some efforts, recovered sufficient presence of mind to mingle with her inquiries respecting his family, some regret, that she had not heard from them in reply to her last letters.

" You—you are in their debt," said he, his eye anxiously fixed on her face.

" No, indeed !" she replied quickly.

" You never answered the letters I entrusted to Lady Wyedale !"

Felicia raised her eyes to his ; they spoke a language that could not be misunderstood. She had never received them—he did not speak, but anxiously tried to screen her from the inclemency of the weather, and in silence they reached the little gate of her lowly dwelling.

“ This—this is my humble habitation,” said she, with assumed playfulness. “ Will you condescend to take shelter in it from the storm ? ” He opened the gate, and Jenny, with a smile that distended her ample mouth two inches at least, ushered him into the parlour, while Felicia stepped up stairs to change her dripping clothes.

Mr. Berkely surveyed the room with blended feelings of pity, love, and respect. Its walls were simply stained with green—its curtains were pure as the mountain snow—and all spoke neatness and harmony. A few flowers, a small collection of books, and some drawings by Rosalind and herself, were its only decorations. A volume of Sturm’s Reflections peeped from among a host of small books ; he took up one, and found it contained the redoubtable history of “ The House that Jack built (a new

edition), with many improvements in words of one syllable." He put it down with a sensation of mortification he could not repress. The loud laugh of infantile merriment struck upon his heart and ear—the door opened, and Felicia, leading by the hand a beautiful child, suddenly entered. She approached, and seemed to wish he should notice her; but Mr. Berkely recoiled from the little object of her tenderness, and placed her a chair without making those advances to intimacy with her young niece which she evidently desired.

"See, Mr. Berkely," said she, extending the playful child towards him, seemingly unconscious of his ill-disguised coldness, "this is my only companion—my little niece, and this dear babe of a sister, beloved even—" her voice faltered—"was entrusted to my care by a heart-broken father. In his last moments he entreated me never to desert the helpless innocent he was so soon to leave, and in discharging the sacred obligations of such a bequest, I find myself beguiled of many a dreary hour."

Berkely looked earnestly in her face—the open brow—the tranquil features--the unhe-

sitating voice, announced that all within was peace and serenity.

“How have I wronged you!” said he, after a pause.

“Wronged me!” said Felicia.

“Yes, wronged you!” repeated he, taking her hand with deep emotion.

“Impossible—it is not in your nature to injure any one.” Her hand rested in his as in that of a trusted brother—her smile was that of undisturbed confidence, and the folly, the injustice of his suspicions, crimsoned his face with a blush of shame.

“Yes, dear Felicia, I have, indeed, injured you. I had not a mind capable of appreciating the purity, the nobleness of your’s; and I thought I believed—yes, I will confess my ungenerous suspicions, that lingering attachment to Evanmore prompted you to sacrifice all the world to succour his child.”

Felicia involuntarily started, and attempted to withdraw her hand from his.

“Nay, dear Felicia,” cried he, gently declining it, “let me not be the only one to whom you can refuse forgiveness. I have, indeed, wronged a soul pure as that of angels,

but let a life of devoted attachment atone for my error. Oh, Felicia, long and ardently have I loved you! but I could not, could not endure to offer my heart to one whose liveliest affections were buried in the grave of her sister's husband. Still I sought you, for I was restless and miserable. Unwilling to apply to Mr. Leycester for your direction, lest it might betray the deepness of my interest, months have passed away since I commenced my anxious search; for without allowing myself to see the absurdity and impropriety of seeking a woman I dared not permit myself to love, I yet panted for an interview. Heaven has granted my wishes, I will not call it chance; and say, dear Felicia, can you pardon my injustice, can you return my attachment? If years of unremitting attentions will, at length, give me a place in your heart, I will wait with joy, till you can say—I am yours. Then will I proudly claim you, then will I be a father to your little orphan. Yes, I will atone for my mean jealousy—my ungenerous conduct, and the child of Evanmore shall be brought up with mine, shall lie in my bosom, and be unto me as a daughter. Speak, dear Felicia, and say I

have not forfeited that esteem which once I flattered myself you cherished for me!"

But Felicia was incapable of speaking : a thousand mingled images of bliss and sadness crowded to her heart, and the hand, resting with confiding security in his, alone betrayed that Berkely had no reason to despair.

CHAPTER XIV.

She was a form of life and light—
That seen—became a part of sight,
And rose—where'er I turned mine eye
The Morning-star of Memory.

Lord Byron.

“WE must not let our bridal happiness interrupt the melancholy stillness of my poor sister’s expiring hours,” said Felicia, when early the next morning Mr. Berkely came to renew his vows of attachment.

“Certainly not!” said he; but his face, contradicting the firmness of his words, looked irresolute and uneasy.

“The term of probation will be short,” said Felicia, marking the expression of his features, while a deeper shade of sadness stole over her

own. “ It is impossible the despairing spirit can long inhabit its frail tenement. She has no one but me to depend upon—no hand will close with gentleness and pity her dying eyes, if I desert her—desert her ! Oh, Mr. Berkely, let not the confession lower me in your esteem ; but she is dearer to me now, stretched on the bed of penitence and death, than, when arrayed in all the pride of youth and loveliness, every eye followed her with admiration. You know not how I loved her—for years I dwelt upon her remembrance with a fervor of attachment I can never, never feel again. We were orphans, and once clung to each other with an ardour that brooked not an instant’s separation. Oh, how we wept when we were torn from the fostering care of our mother. I was never doomed to feel the want of that mother’s protection ; but her unhappy destiny—”

Felicia paused. She to whose baneful counsels and injudicious conduct, the fate of her sister might be clearly traced, was gone to answer for her errors ; and Felicia shrunk with pious delicacy from casting a shade of obloquy on the memory of the dead.

“ Urge me not on this point, dear Berkely,”

cried she, placing her hand on his arm, her pleading face turned on his, as if in earnest entreaty, “I must not leave it to a stranger, to soothe the last moments of such a mourner—I must not leave it to strangers, to point the last hopes—to receive the last breath—of a sister!”

Mr. Berkely could not resist such a supplication; but, determined never more to leave her till he could call her his own, he took the lodgings he had formerly occupied near Chiswick, and sent for Miss Berkely to be his companion while his mother and sister prepared to remove from the Grove, to a small, but delightful residence, within half a mile of its plantations.

It was Felicia’s wish, to conceal from Rosalind this happy change in her situation: she possessed that delicacy of feeling, that discriminating *tact*, which instantly suggests, and guards against, the possibility of inflicting a wound on the sensibility of others. To hear that she was on the point of becoming the wife of Mr. Berkely, she feared might awaken a long train of reflections that must be painful to her, and she cautiously abstained from alluding to him, till she fancied, from Rosalind’s

sometimes distant manner, and restless uneasiness, she was already in possession of her secret.

Rosalind heard her with a sickly smile of pleasure; and when she mentioned, that Mr. Berkely had voluntarily promised to consider her children as his own, a gleam of joy illumined her faded eyes with something of their former brilliancy.

"In your absence, the woman of the house told me you had a '*sweetheart*,'" said she, "and I knew it could be no other. I felt no uneasy fears as to the consequences of your union. I knew your promise would be held sacred through life; but I have felt grieved at your withholding the intelligence from me, because it appeared as if you feared it might give me pain; yet, O Felicia! if—if I had lived—believe me, the spectacle of your happiness would have been my only source of satisfaction."

Felicia replied only by tears and caresses. Her's was the affection that clings yet more fondly to the dying object of its tenderness, and every hour seemed to wind fresh bonds of love around her heart. Yet she could have

parted from her with joy, had she seen in her that depth of penitence—that strength of piety—which assures us that the exchange will be from suffering and sorrow, to the brightness and bliss of eternal happiness. But though she now never refused to hear Felicia when she prayed or read to her, she did not join in those fervent aspirations which indicate a spirit under the influence of religious impressions. Still Felicia persevered; and those only, who have known the bitter disappointment which attends the constant failure of constant attempts to awaken the dormant spirit—rouse the torpid mind to energy and feeling—those only, who have been exposed to the contagious depression of such scenes—listened to the complaining querulous voice—marked the despairing eye cast down in determined hopelessness, can be any judge of the merit of such perseverance.

“Alas!” she thought, as she watched the languid listless despairing features, and saw the suspicious glance of the hollow eye, and heard the half-uttered moans of the tortured mind; “is this the gay and lovely being, whose step was the bound of joy—whose heart heaved but with delight—whose proud spirit scorned the

dominion of sorrow? Is it Rosalind thus smitten, thus subdued? Can it be the generous, volatile Rosalind thus changed into the cold, silent, broken-hearted misanthrope? Yes," she mentally pursued, "the thoughtless hilarity of youth is not fortitude; and unless it be accompanied by those principles which teach us to regard this world, not as the bourn of our hopes, but the short passage to another of eternal duration, and instruct us to view its trials, griefs, and pains, as so many guides to conduct us to brighter scenes, it must fade before the sorrows of life."

To this awful, this unknown world, Rosalind was now fast hastening; and Felicia unwilling, to leave her a moment, insisted on having a small pallet placed by the side of her bed. Rosalind acquiesced in this arrangement; but it did not seem to give her pleasure. The weak, weary body needed its last sleep, and the throbbing heart so lately torn by anguish, pride, and resentment, was already stilled by the cold hand of approaching death. The high hectic flush, which had succeeded to the rich deep healthful glow that once sat on her polished cheek, was displaced by a fixed un-

changing whiteness ; and the eye, once radiant with the fire of youthful animation, was half closed by the downcast lid, now so shadowy—so thin—it scarcely seemed to shield the dim decaying orb from the light it abhorred. She received Felicia's attentions mechanically—the devastation of the mind was complete, save on one point—a big silent tear would still steal from the heavy eyes, when she glanced them on her dishonoured babe. Yet there were moments when the spirit, like the last struggles of a dying taper, which gleams with a feeble, fluctuating light, then suddenly bursts into a resplendent flame till it vanishes for ever, seemed to acquire new powers, new energy ; and with starts of anguished feeling and impatience, she would conjure Felicia never to let Lord Edgermond know the fate of his child, or, if it were possible, the fate of her he had destroyed. As she approached the termination of her mortal existence, Felicia experienced another pang,—the suffering spirit sometimes wandered ; and during these periods of slight delirium, she would revert to the scenes of their youth, fancy herself again the gay heiress of Lady Wyedale, the star of fashion and

beauty; or, unconscious of Felicia's presence, would mourn for her as dead in those words she remembered she had once admired, now rendered doubly touching by the confused perception she seemed to entertain of her own fallen state, and the efforts this lost sister had made to preserve her. At these periods the low and mournful cadence, in which she used to sing, or rather chant

“ I had not wander'd wild and wide,
With such an Angel for my guide ;
Nor Heaven, nor Earth, could then reprove me,
If she had lived, and lived to love me,”

overpowered Felicia's fortitude. But it was seldom the vigorous mind long continued clouded. The tears Felicia sometimes shed—the involuntary shudder with which she listened to her sepulchral laugh, or marked the unnatural animation of her hollow eyes, frequently dispelled the illusion; and from these waking dreams, she was always roused, when the remembrance of Evanmore, or Lord Edgermond flashed on her senses. She would then utter a low, wild, plaintive shriek, and pressing her emaciated hands on her throbbing temples,

burst into paroxysms of bitter tears and lamentations.

Rosalind had been one evening more than commonly agitated; and while she mourned the strength of those feelings which seemed, even yet, to contend with the chilling influence of departing nature, Felicia watched by her side. She slept—and the sinking lamp, the increasing gloom, scarcely permitted her to distinguish the fading form, whose beauty would so soon be mingled with the dust—her who was so soon to say to “corruption, thou art my father; and to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister.” She had been buried in a deep and melancholy reverie some hours, when the paper which was wrapped around the taper, suddenly caught fire, and emitted a strong gleam of pale light over the features of her sister. She raised her head, and saw with blended feelings of grief and astonishment, they were fast changing into the livid hues of death. She trembled, and lifting her hands, exclaimed in a low fervent voice,

“ Oh, merciful Power! prolong, if it seemeth to thee good, prolong her wretched existence, that she may yet become one of thine. I ask

not her life; but oh, grant her the light of thy countenance, that ere she go hence, her spirit may be purified! The silence of night is around her—let not a deeper night environ her. Hear my supplications and accept them. Oh, let not her soul go down in darkness to the grave! Let her not leave me in despair!"

A deep sigh from Rosalind, interrupted this ardent prayer. She started, and bending over her with tender solicitude, saw that her cheeks were bathed in the silent tears that stole from her down-cast lids. Felicia felt deeply affected.

"Dearest Rosalind," she fondly cried, "I fear—I fear, I have disturbed you—I have awoke you—"

Rosalind caught her hand, and pressed it to her heart. "I did not sleep—" she pointed to her child. "For me, your prayers are unavailing!"—a stifled cry of anguish burst from her pallid lips—"But he—my Rosa may yet be saved—make—make them Christians!" She half raised her fragile form, and gazed on her slumbering child. Her look was long and lingering—all the mother was in its eager glance—she turned and fixed her dying eyes with indescribable emotion on Felicia—a film seemed

to overspread their lustre—the lids closed—a dark shadow passed over her divine features—her pulse grew fainter, and fainter—Felicia grasped her cold clammy hands—the pressure was feebly returned, and the dim eyes again opened—they dwelt sadly, yet fondly, on the countenance of her sister—the heavy lids closed once more—the features became fixed and steadfast—the pulse fluttered—stopped—Felicia knelt to receive the last breath—but the struggle of nature was over—the weary way-worn spirit had fled.

Felicia hung over the senseless corpse with feelings she strove not to repress. The hand of death had already robbed her once-brilliant countenance of that enchanting beauty which had undone her—the temples were sunk—the forehead was tense—the numberless graces that once resided there, were fled—scarcely a charm remained to deck his victim for her untimely tomb; and when she gazed on the ashy features—the heavy eyelids—the despairing brow—Felicia could scarcely realize it to herself, that this was the gay and blooming Rosalind,—the bright illusive meteor whose dazzling but dangerous effulgence had been equally

fatal to herself, and all around her. She wept—bitterly wept—yet she did not wish the freed spirit could again reanimate its ruined mansion. She loved her; but she was fallen from her high estate; and to the guilty, she knew, this world is but a world of sorrow—while to the penitent, the next is a world of glory.

Rosalind was one of those wandering phosphoric lights which illumine the darkness of night—beautiful, but delusive—bright, but unreal. Felicia resembled the steady flame whose beams are more felt than seen—whose property it is to diffuse life, and heat, and animation, rather than to give splendour or brilliancy.

The soothing affectionate attentions of Mr. Berkely, and the consciousness of having discharged her duty to her beloved sister, soon restored Felicia to comparative serenity, and in six months, she became the wife of Mr. Berkely.

Jenny, still ambitious of the high honour of being a housekeeper, accompanied her to the Grove. Her lover proved a most excellent young man, and in twelve months afterwards,

when the savings of both amounted to nearly two hundred pounds, Mr. Berkely lent them a few hundreds more, and placed them in a small farm near her revered mistress.

Little Rosalind Evanmore was the companion of her aunt, and soon became equally dear to her uncle. Her infant brother was placed with a respectable nurse in the neighbourhood of town, till Rosalind's unhappy story had so far died away, that he might form a part of Felicia's family group without exciting the astonishment or indignation of those extremely virtuous persons, who, in their zeal to punish the wickedness of the mother, might deem it right to abandon her innocent child to neglect and ruin.

Miss Beaumont and Mr. Flickerton at length married, and became as unhappy and embarrassed as might have been expected from their ungoverned tempers and absurd pursuits. With her former associates in high life, Felicia had little future intercourse, excepting only Mrs. Hustleton. Mr. Osborne had been united to Miss Louisa Dursley nearly two years before she was mistress of the Grove, and pleased with the connexion, delighted with

the assiduous attentions of her young relatives, Mrs. Hustleton finally took a house close to the estate, which Mr. Osborne had purchased soon after his marriage, near the residence of Mrs. Osborne's family. They had visited previous to Felicia's marriage, and after that event, some few efforts were made by both parties towards a more intimate acquaintance, without, however, any great success; for in addition to a wide dissimilarity in their sentiments on those essential subjects where coincidence is necessary to preserve any thing like real friendship, Mrs. Hustleton was the constant companion of the two families of Osborne and Dursley; and though Felicia had entirely forgiven her, she could never see, without secret sensations of uneasiness, the woman whose malevolence had been instrumental in robbing her lamented sister of happiness, of life, and of honour. Nor did Mrs. Hustleton, in return, cherish more kindly feelings towards her. She had always been afraid of her; and recollecting the many calm retorts her impertinence had provoked with the rancour of a bad mind, who secretly feels they were deserved. But these were not her only causes of enmity

against Felicia. She knew, that she had *injured* her, wounded her in the part she was most vulnerable. She was aware Felicia was acquainted with the share she had had in producing that cruel attack on Rosalind's character, which Lord Edgermond had subsequently avowed to some of his friends, had first suggested the idea, that she was attainable. This was an injury she thought Felicia would never pardon; and, though her manners were invariably polite, she read in her averted eye, and distant voice, not the sentiments Felicia entertained, but those she would have cherished in similar circumstances. Her temper and habits remained the same, and two or three unavailing attempts to regulate the economy of Felicia's establishment by that of Mrs. Osborne's, completed her antipathy. Still Felicia's superiority of mind, and the high respect with which she was regarded by their common circle of acquaintance, rendered the betrayal of her dislike extremely difficult, and very dangerous; and though it is seldom that persons who are inclined to inflict a sly wound cannot effect the purpose, she would have been almost at a loss, had not an unlooked-for event at length presented her

with a thousand happy opportunities. After a union of three or four years, little Rosalind remained the sole object of Felicia's care.

Here was a wide field for the exercise of Mrs. Hustleton's ingenuity and the indulgence of her humour, and she traversed it with unwearyed steps, unabated vigour, whenever she had Felicia for a companion. Every topic, however begun, generally ended with some allusion to her want of family, and the pleasures of a nursery. The most minute particulars relative to the little Osbornes were the unceasing themes of her conversation, and the successive epochs of shortening their petticoats, cutting their teeth, learning to walk, leaving off their caps, &c. &c., marked and detailed with all the solemnity and precision of the transactions of the Philosophical Society.

" Dear little Frank has got into cloth clothes, since we had the pleasure of seeing you'; he had out-grown all his petticoats; indeed, he was almost a sight. Such a fine, noble-looking little fellow in petticoats was quite out of character, and his little brother does so envy him: he has got all his teeth, and, what will surprise you, even sweet, laughing little Louisa

has four already, and nurse thinks will have a fifth in a few days at farthest—then she has such a charming head of curly hair, 'tis quite surprising, and a shame to cover it with a cap: her mamma must bring her to see you some morning, my dear Mrs. Berkely, I am sure you would be delighted with her. It is so engaging—dear playful little creature can say, 'Pa' quite plain, and 'Mamma' almost. Really children are such an amusement, as I often say, especially in the country, I don't know what Mrs. Osborne would do without her little darlings, she finds them such a source of pleasure and employment."

Sometimes these panegyries on her young relatives were followed by apologies for dwelling on their perfections, and a polite hope, that Mrs. Berkely would soon be a partaker of Mrs. Osborne's happiness; and sometimes finished by lamenting, that she had been a stranger to these interesting cares so long. The being childless, she seemed to regard with as much secret horror as the Jews of old, and many friendly exertions did she make to reconcile Felicia to the calamity, or induce her to believe this reproach might still be taken away from

her. “ She had heard of women who had children, after they had been married *much longer* than herself. One lady, an acquaintance of the Dursleys, had had a child after being married fourteen years, and several after six or seven. No doubt, it was a *great* mortification; but many people were *comfortable* without them.” Every time Felicia looked ill, or she chose to think she did, with smiles, and winks, and nods, she “ *rejoiced to see her*—all now was as it ought to be. Indeed, she could not find in her heart to pity Mrs. Berkely, &c. &c.”

To these various attacks of disguised malice, Felicia always calmly and firmly replied, that though she should have considered children a great blessing had they been granted her, she was perfectly happy without them; and found so much pleasure and occupation in bringing up her little niece, she had neither leisure nor inclination for indulging in vain regrets on the subject.

“ Oh, but, my dear Mrs. Berkely, you do not affect to say, that you should not prefer a child of your own—of Mr. Berkely’s—to one of Mr. Evanmore’s!”

Felicia, startled by the emphasis on *Mr.*

Evanmore, said, in a hesitating voice, "No." "Well, my dear Felicia, I own I think we could not love any child more dearly than our little Rosa," said Mr. Berkely, who one morning entered the room in time to comprehend what was passing.

"Oh, yes, you would!" said Mrs. Hustleton, with a smile, and a significant movement of her head; "and I hope you will one day experience the truth of the remark, my dear Sir."

"I am indifferent about it," replied he, coolly. "Children are undoubtedly a great amusement when young, and a great consolation afterwards, provided they become what we wish them; but so many instances of paternal disappointment are hourly before our eyes, that I think, independently of their criminality, such lamentations are in the highest degree foolish. Even when they realize our fondest hopes, how often are we robbed of them by death; or how often do we ourselves endure the most excruciating pangs in witnessing theirs!"

Mrs. Hustleton was rejoiced "he could thus reconcile himself to what most gentlemen deemed a *very serious* disappointment."

"Those who did esteem it as such, certainly thought very differently from himself," he replied, with a good-humoured smile. "He sincerely pitied them, and hoped they would in time see their error. His little niece" (and he fondled the child on his knee as he spoke) "was her uncle's darling—was she not?"

"Yes, till her uncle has a darling of his own, and then his feelings will be very different."

"They might, but he could not believe it. A child of his own, would, perhaps, be dearer to him; but his paternal feelings never having been awakened, he could not at present conceive their force: he was like a bird born in confinement, which might have experienced greater happiness in a state of freedom; but ignorant of those higher joys it had lost, could imagine no happiness beyond its comfortable cage."

Mrs. Hustleton was exasperated at her ineffectual attempts to persuade him he ought to be miserable, and, with a smile that ill concealed her secret mortification, she said, "It was very, very fortunate he possessed so much philosophy; or rather she ought to compliment

him on his good-nature. No doubt, these were the sentiments of Mrs. Berkely, and his attention to her wishes was well known."

"Oh, there I must plead guilty!" said he, laughing. "I am extremely under my wife's influence, and so anxious to consult her inclinations, that even if it were a great disappointment to me, I would not avow it on her account; and more than that, I assure you, every succeeding day strengthens her power over me. I would not, on any consideration, do the least thing of moment without soliciting her opinion and advice. She is, in short, my counsellor-general on all occasions; and never was the wisdom of the old adage of 'two heads better than one,' more fully exemplified than in our instance."

Mrs. Hustleton could endure no more. To find not only that all her endeavours to render them unhappy were ineffectual, but that her secret desire to sow the seeds of dissention between them had been betrayed to the ridicule and contempt of Mr. Berkely, was too much for her patience to bear; and starting up, she said, with a bitter smile, "She was happy to

discover they so lightly esteemed a trial, too often considered as the greatest weakener of domestic attachment."

After ordering the carriage in a tone evincing that the Osbornes had all due regard to her fifteen thousand pounds, she left the house with her niece, Mrs. Osborne, in a tumult of contending passions.

The instant the carriage drove off, Mr. Berkely, who had politely assisted them into it, returned to the drawing-room, and closing the door, burst into a loud laugh.

"Well, dearest Felicia," he cried, "what say you to the title of counsellor-general, and what do you think of my humble acknowledgment, that I am under petticoat government, together with my stout resistance to the compassion she was so anxious to bestow upon us both! And, moreover, which of the three do you esteem the most miserable at this moment?"

"Unhappy woman," said Felicia; "she is, in truth, deserving of pity. Well has it been observed, that a more terrific scene of wretchedness can hardly be conceived than when inflamed passions are let loose without check

or control; and so little do I resent her endeavours to make me valueless in your eyes, that I most truly deplore the misery she is enduring."

"I am not quite sure I feel so much like a Christian," said he, smiling; "at least, I hope she will have been taught a lesson that may deter her, in future, from trying to sow the seeds of discord between a man and his wife. Silly woman! I am more incensed than I should, I believe, otherwise have been, at her giving *me* credit for being such a discontented, irritable fool. No, dearest Felicia, I can, with truth, affirm, I have never breathed a sincere sigh of regret that I am not a father, and I hope you will not. Children are withheld from us, I feel assured, for some wise, though inscrutable, purpose; and that the blessing may be doubled to us, we must consider all who want our aid or protection as such. I have been thinking we may now send for poor little John. The story is sufficiently blown over to admit of our sheltering him along with his sister; and if we discharge our duty to them, the world, and ourselves, we shall have neither time, nor rea-

son, to lament that we are debarred from the performance of any other."

'Such were the sentiments of Mr. Berkely. His actions were in strict conformity to them; and though Felicia sometimes heaved a sigh of regret at the remembrance of her sister, it was divested of bitterness by the recollection of her anxious exertions to soothe her sufferings—the hope, that her patient endeavours to teach the departing spirit to implore forgiveness and mercy, were not unavailing. Rosalind's was not a temper to acknowledge its errors to a fellow-mortal; but the anguish that rent her soul at the awful moment of dissolution, betrayed she *had mourned* her guilt; and to Felicia, her tears, her despair, were more convincing testimonies of an awakened mind—conveyed more hope of the remission of her sins, than that self-confidence, that assurance of acceptance, which is so often deemed the proof of a pious heart. With Mr. Berkely she experienced as much felicity as ever falls to the lot of man. She had not married with the fallacious hope that every hour would be an hour of bliss, nor yet that she should meet with perfection even

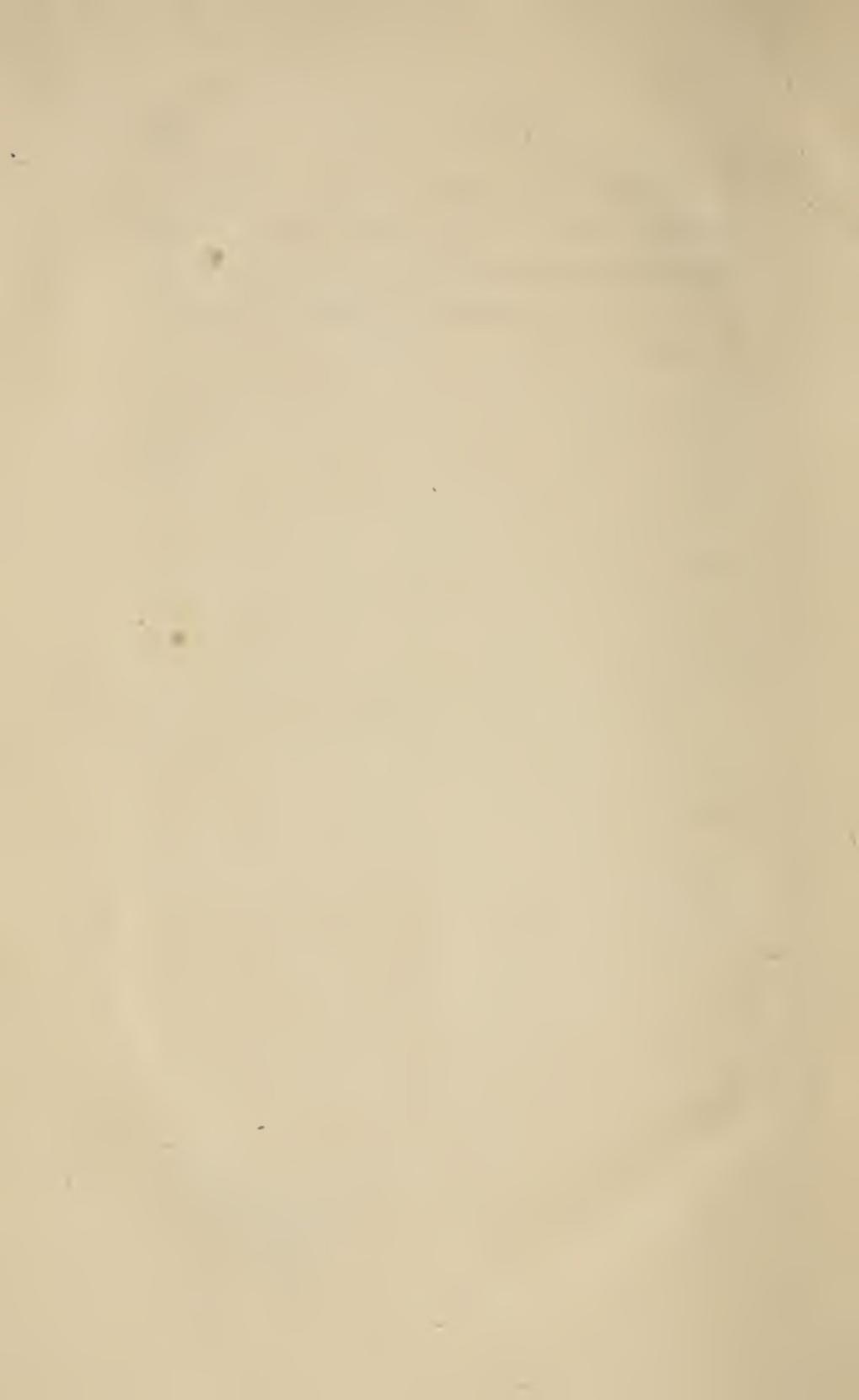
in him; and her chastened expectations were amply realized. Sensible that she owed her present happiness and future brilliant prospects to the wise admonitions and example of her still-lamented aunt, it was her unceasing attempt to instil into the minds of her little relatives the same principles which had safely guided her through so many and so difficult trials.

Soon after her union, she received a visit from her kind friend Mrs. Marshington, whose counsels had strengthened her wavering virtue. She wept when she saw her, but they were tears rather of joy than sorrow. She was reminded, by her presence, of the untimely death of Evanmore; but she contemplated the dissolution of their engagement as a blessing for which she could never be too grateful. Nature had implanted in his bosom the seeds of every virtue; but art was necessary to mature the beautiful blossoms they bore in early youth. Under the baneful influence of a mother professing to be a Christian, yet unanimated by a real spark of vital Christianity, he had learnt to be ashamed of the principles

by which he was actuated; and in the hour of peril, he fell, like his guilty Rosalind, not the victim of secret vice or personal imprudence, but of an injudicious education.

THE END

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